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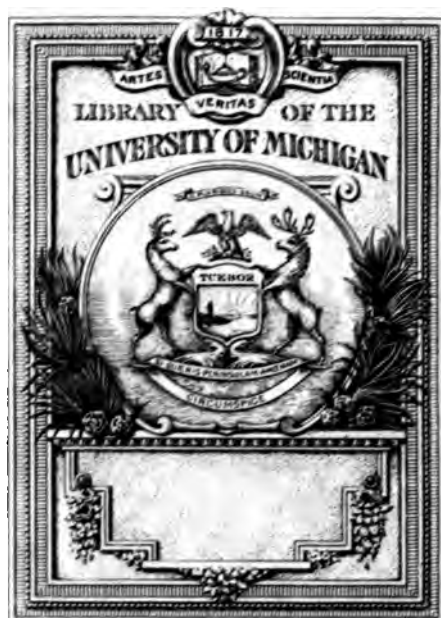
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THE
PHILOSOPHY OF MORALS;
AN INVESTIGATION,
BY A NEW AND EXTENDED ANALYSIS,
OF THE FACULTIES AND THE STANDARDS
EMPLOYED IN THE
DETERMINATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG:
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF
Theology, Jurisprudence, and General Politics.

BY ALEXANDER SMITH, M. A.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PART III.

OF THE MORAL QUALITIES AND ATTRIBUTES OF AN *AGENT*.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

No two descriptions of inquiry can well be imagined more distinct from one another, than is that, on the one hand, where we should ask, what is the proper way of amputating a limb, of reducing a dislocation, of extracting a stone? — from that, on the other, where we should ask, — what makes a good surgeon?

Yet these two species of inquiry are not at all more distinct than are these following, namely, — what makes an action fit or right to be performed? — and — what makes an agent a virtuous, a meritorious, a good moral agent?

The last two questions, though of an entirely

different species, have been very frequently confounded, by proposing for discussion some such point as this, — what makes a good action? — To which some have answered, it is a good action which is of *utility* or productive of happiness; others, it is a good action which a man performs with a *right intention*, or according to his *conscience*.

The other two inquiries, though less frequently mixed up together, might yet admit of being presented as one, in some such form as this — what makes a good *operation*? — which might either be answered by describing the scientific method of performing any particular operation, or without such description, by saying it was one which the surgeon performed in conformity with scientific rules, with expedition, self-possession, and tenderness to the patient.

It is very obvious, however, that in any case where we should propose to exhibit the *rules of surgery*, we should be involved in quite a different set of subjects from what would engage us, were it our design to describe the qualifications of a *good surgeon*. In laying down those rules we should have to advert to the consequence of cutting this artery, that vein; to the advantage of using this, or that instrument; of beginning the operation in this, or in that place; to the comparative facility of performance, or efficiency of the result, in this, or in that stage of the disease, with

this or with that preparation of the bodily system of the patient : but all our directions would hinge upon this point, *and this alone* — what mode of operating would most effectually eradicate the disorder, and with least pain and danger to the sufferer ? and we should be very far indeed from considering, what mode would most display the skill, the steadiness, the vigour, the presence of mind, or the humanity of *the operator*. On the other hand, were we to describe any particular operator as an able and accomplished surgeon, we should display his merits, not by shewing in what manner his mode of operation tended to the ease, safety, and restoration of the patient, as compared with other modes ; but by referring to his ingenuity in discovering such a mode, or to the extent and correctness of his information as to such modes in general as might be already approved. We should praise him, not that his *method* was a good, as opposed to a bad one ; but that *he* contrived or knew of it, as opposed to his not having contrived or his being ignorant of it. We should represent him as being scientific, skilful, discriminating ; cool, yet anxious ; tender, yet resolute ; prompt, yet cautious. In short, in the one case, having in view an end to be attained in performing any operation, we should consider the suitableness of the *method* in relation to that end ; in the other, supposing a method established, or to be established, we should then consider the qualification

of an *operator* in relation to that method : his knowledge of it ; his care, diligence, expedition, humanity, in discovering, or in acting according to it.

What it would be, in respect of the science of *surgery*, to exhibit the *rules* by which its various operations ought to be performed, and the grounds of these rules, is what, in respect of the science of *morals*, has been done in the preceding *part* of this treatise. What it would be, in respect of the former science, to delineate the character of an expert and skilful *surgeon*, is what, in respect of the latter science, is to be done in the part now commenced.

In other words, having shewn what are the rules of *fitness* and *obligation*, I am now to shew the various attributes which may belong to an *agent*, in relation to the fulfilment of those rules. And it is not to be lost sight of, that this part of the subject no more forms a branch of the *science of morals*, or what ought strictly to be reckoned such, than a discourse upon the qualifications of a good surgeon, lawyer, divine, soldier, or mechanic, forms a part respectively of the sciences of surgery, law, theology, military tactics, or mechanics. Whether such a parallel as now furnished, holds good in every respect, is more than I am concerned to maintain. It holds so far as I have occasion to employ it — which is merely to the effect of shewing that the truths of the science of morals,

properly so called, are determined upon grounds as remote from any thing belonging to the character of a virtuous agent, as the truths of mathematics are determined on grounds remote from any thing belonging to the character of a good mathematician ; that in attempting to lay down the rule of duty in any particular case, we should be as far from asking, with such a view, what it would be that a virtuous or a meritorious agent would do in such a case, as from asking, in reference to the efficiency of a machine, whether it was such a one as a good mechanic would contrive ; or from determining the truth of a proposition in Euclid, by considering whether it was one which a good mathematician would receive. The truth of a geometrical theorem, the efficiency of a machine, the obligation of a moral rule, are things each of which stands upon independent grounds of its own ; and the intellectual or moral character of an agent is something belonging to him in relation to certain systems of truth, thus conceived as independently existing.

On the other hand, in describing the moral attributes of an agent, (the subject now to be entered upon,) it is not at all to be looked for, that we should enumerate the different particulars that form the conduct of such an agent — as that he pays his debts, tells the truth, observes temperance, bestows charity. These are his *duties*, and what he performs ; but it is not because these are

his duties, and what he performs, (nor does it signify what the duties may really be, but because *he is disposed* to do his duty)—whatever particulars the general notion of duty may involve—that *he is virtuous*: just as we should not say, he is a good mathematician who knows and believes that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal—that a parallelogram of the same base and altitude with a triangle is double that triangle—and so on, (giving an abstract of mathematical truths in general ;)—but he is a good mathematician, who, in relation to a certain system of truths, previously conceived to exist as such, has a fondness for investigating, a talent for judging, and a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of such truths.

CHAPTER II.

OF VIRTUE, MERIT, AND ABSOLUTE RECTITUDE, AS SEVERALLY
DISTINCT.

WHEN we consider what that is in the conduct of an agent, which can be the object of any moral sentiment — which can raise an idea of his excellence or the contrary — make us think well or ill of him — excite satisfaction or dissatisfaction — fulfil or disappoint our notions of the perfection or completeness of his character or conduct as an agent, — we find that the object of any such sentiment comprehends two things, namely, his external actions, or the actual issue or result of his agency, and his internal mind or principle of agency, which gives birth to the outward act.

But when we proceed farther to examine what that is, even in a mind or active principle, which is the subject of moral attributes, or to which our notion of the moral excellence of such a mind can attach, we find that the subject of such attributes is not single, but twofold; and that the notion of moral excellence may arise in relation

either to the nature of the *dispositions* belonging to an agent, or to the manner of his exercising his *free will*. There may be an excellence in what he *is*, an excellence in what he *wills* to be or to do. In short, his nature, his constitution, is one thing; his volitions, his choices, his wilful conduct, are another.

The *virtue* of an agent is something in his nature or disposition.

The *merit* of an agent, is something attributed to him for the manner of his choice.

The *absolute rectitude* of an agent, is something in the actual issue or result of his agency.

In what virtue, merit, and absolute rectitude, respectively consist, I now proceed more particularly to explain.

CHAPTER III.

OF VIRTUE.

It has already been shewn that the notion of happiness, as conceived in the mind of a rational being, is attended with the perception, that it is something *fit* to be promoted; and that this perception of fitness is, in like manner, attended with another perception, namely, that of *obligation* on an agent to act in such a manner as to promote that which is fit.

The perception that some effect is fit, must, in the very nature of such perception, be attended with some desire or disposition, more or less, to produce such effect; must create a motive to act for the production of it; the production of it *for its own sake* must be an end.

The perception of obligation, again, as lying on an agent, must necessarily carry along with it some desire or disposition more or less to fulfil the obligation; must create a motive for fulfilling it;

the fulfilment of it, *for the agent's own sake*, must be an end.

The disposition or desire to do what is fit or what is obligatory (simply, in each case, for its being so) is *virtue*—of which, indeed, these words just form the definition.

A regard to the fitness of an effect, and a regard to personal obligation, admit, in their operation as active impulses, of being separated ; and a difference is even observable in what may be called the species of virtue which they respectively constitute.

In the first, the agent does something because *it* ought to be done ; in the second, because *he* ought to do it. The first is more fitted to generate the amiable qualities of kindness, benevolence, compassion ; the second, the more sublime ones of resolution, firmness, self-control. The weakness of the first is a tendency to promote a present good at the expense of a principle of more general advantage ; the weakness of the second, to pursue an abstract rule of duty, without regard to consequences, and sometimes, therefore, beyond the point to which it may, in fact, be a duty.

When the abstract notion of obligation or duty has once been formed, it may be connected, in the mind of an agent, with a variety of particular actions, without his having in view, at the time, the

ground of the obligation, i. e. the fitness of the effect, and even without his having ever perceived it. Though the notion of obligation, however, may exist without an immediate reference to any species of effect, it cannot be originally formed without such a reference. A child may be told, — this is your duty, you ought to act thus or thus ; and, if well disposed, may fulfil such duty, without even thinking of any good effect thereby produced. But until a child has once perceived how some good end is served by certain actions or the contrary, — you may tell him that he will be made to suffer for one kind of behaviour, or obtain gratification for another ; but it will be in vain to tell him he *ought* to act so and so ; the term will want a meaning.

The notion of obligation, then, is necessarily and essentially built upon that of fitness, a regard for obligation upon a regard for fitness. But a regard to moral fitness is nothing more than a regard to the promotion of happiness. For though it is not fit merely that happiness should be promoted, but that it should be promoted by a just distribution, or according to moral desert, yet to desire the promotion of happiness at all, is to desire to promote it equally, rather than unequally — the one desire necessarily involving the other ; and again, to desire most the happiness of those who most deserve it, is, at least, thus far resolvable into a general

desire for the promotion of happiness, that it is desiring the happiness of those who have themselves made the greatest exertions for that end : our opinion of their desert being, so far, necessarily proportioned to the importance we annex to the object, in relation to which their desert has arisen. On the whole, then, if we would seek to resolve virtue into its simplest essence, we must find it to consist in a regard for the happiness of all sentient beings ; and the comparative power which virtue, as a motive, exercises in the minds of different agents, will be according to the degree in which each possesses this regard.

Let it be carefully observed that a regard for the happiness of all sentient beings, as here understood, includes a regard for that of the *agent himself*. Hence the word *benevolence*, if standing merely for a desire to promote the happiness of others, will not express the idea of *virtue* as now offered.*

* The word *benevolence*, though in its etymological meaning denoting in general, to *wish well* to any one, i. e. to wish his good or happiness, is yet in common usage limited to signify only — wishing well to *others*, as distinct from one's self ; and in this way usually stands opposed to selfishness or self-love. I believe all the objections to those theories which make virtue to consist in benevolence, are founded in this limitation ; and it requires nothing more than an extension of the meaning of the term, an extension which its etymology warrants, to make

And now having found a single principle with which moral virtue may be identified, let us next consider to what results this principle will naturally give birth.

Taken absolutely, then, as being a desire to promote the happiness and prevent the misery of all sentient beings, including the agent himself, the virtuous principle merely stands opposed to the want or weakness of such principle.

Looking however to the desire of pleasure or happiness to himself, and the aversion to pain or misery, which no living being can be without, the virtuous character, as a disposition to promote the happiness of all beings, must stand opposed to the agent's desire to promote his own ; and his desire to promote even his own happiness, on the whole, and in the greatest degree, must stand opposed to his love of present pleasure, and dislike of present pain.

These three principles, namely, a regard for the good of the whole, a regard for our own greatest good, and a disposition to seize on immediate gratification, I shall, for the sake of brevity, denominate by the terms *benevolence*, *self-love*, and *self-indulgence* ; without inquiring into the exact suitableness of these

those systems unexceptionable — namely, that benevolence should denote *wishing the happiness of all* — of one's self, and all others.

terms for expressing the meaning now attached to each.

Benevolence is opposed both to self-love and to self-indulgence, but more to the former than to the latter. The promotion of the general good interferes much oftener with our deliberate plans for our own advantage than with the impulse of the present moment. Self-indulgence in like manner is opposed both to benevolence and to self-love, but more to the latter than to the former. For while that the gratification of present appetite or impulse is injurious to others it is but times injurious to ourselves. Present impulse indeed often prompts us directly to acts of benevolence to others, until checked by a cautious regard for our own good.

Looking on general benevolence therefore as constituting the principle of virtue it will appear that a facility of yielding to present impulse is in some respects more consistent with a virtuous character, than is an excessive regard to the good of self or the whole. And this in two ways — first, self-indulgence is near less an enemy to benevolence than self-love is; and secondly, although its strength is that it is an enemy to benevolence, it is what is equivalent to the deposit of a more powerful enemy named self-love.

A man who has a great degree of regard

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Looking on general benevolence, therefore, as constituting the principle of virtue, it will appear that a facility of yielding to present impulse is, in some respects, more consistent with a virtuous character, than is an excessive regard to the good of self on the whole ; and this in two ways, — first, self-indulgence is itself less an enemy to benevolence than self-love is ; and secondly, although its strength is that of an enemy to benevolence, it is what is equivalent to the depression of a more powerful enemy, namely, self-love.

A man who has a great degree of regard for,

and care about, his own happiness on the whole, must necessarily acquire a habit of sacrificing to this object his present appetites, feelings, and affections — but he will, for the same reason, be apt to contract a habit of sacrificing to his own good, the good of others. It is not merely that the good of others and our own good are sometimes inconsistent, so that one must be given up for the sake of the other ; for even were they in every instance reconcilable, such is the limited power of the human mind in regard to the number of objects its faculties can at once embrace, that a man who is earnestly intent on the promotion of his own greatest advantage, will entirely lose sight both of his own present ease and gratification, and of the happiness of other beings, in no way different from that in which he loses sight of a sensible object, perfectly within his sphere of vision, by the mere earnestness of his gaze at another. So well however is the main fact itself understood in our practical determinations, that the expression “ a *very prudent* man ” is often used to signify a very *selfish* man, i. e. a man possessed of little benevolence ;—though certainly the notion of *prudence* does not necessarily involve that of selfishness. A habit of entire resignation to the impulses of the moment, and an utter want of self-government, are looked upon as less inconsistent with a generous character, than an habitual atten-

tion to the dictates of prudence ; because not tending, in the same way, to exclude or check the operation of benevolence. Hence the Tom Joneses, the Roderick Randoms, the heroes of most of our popular comedies and novels, are *imprudent* men ; and their imprudence is felt to attach us to their character, as implying the unlimited operation, though of their present humours and passions, yet also of their benevolent affections.

I believe there is always something offensive to us in a great degree of *regard for self*, however little the actions proceeding from this regard may interfere directly with the good of others. Nothing for instance can be more innocent, or even more morally right, than that a man should carefully, and even anxiously, arrange his plans of life, and attentively weigh the expediency of the different schemes presented to his mind, in regard to their probable influence on his happiness. Nothing can be more reasonable and proper, than that he should sedulously watch the preservation of his health, that he should apply his attention to provide against cold and exposure, to regulate his exercise, and to ascertain and use the quantity and qualities of food that will most benefit his constitution. Nothing can be more harmless than that he should contrive how he may most reconcile his different duties and occupations with his own ease

and convenience, and even that he should arrange the details of any little relaxation—a jaunt of pleasure for instance—with a view to extract from it the greatest quantity of enjoyment it can be made to render. Yet, on all such occasions, I believe the display of a *direct, deliberate* concern for one's own happiness or enjoyment, is secretly displeasing to the spectator, and what a person of tact and delicacy will feel to be unbecoming, and try to conceal. I say, a direct and deliberate concern for one's own happiness; for the same remark does not seem to apply to the different passions and affections of our nature, which, however the gratification of them may be for our own happiness, and for our own happiness exclusively, have not that *happiness* for their immediate object. The peculiar dislike with which we behold any exhibition of selfish care or anxiety, is not extended to displays of ambition, of the love of fame and reputation, nor even of the love of money (when pursued as an *end*) or the desire of sensual pleasure.

It is necessary to keep in view, however, that so far as we suppose any compatibility to exist between self-indulgence and virtue, we are only speaking of some degree of self-indulgence, as compared with excessive self-love. So far is a facility of yielding to present impulse from being in itself a part of virtue, or to be encouraged as

such, that a character can never be perfect in which such facility exists; while, on the contrary, a perfect character admits, and even requires, a moderate self-love. Self-indulgence is an enemy to virtue in all but this, that it may sometimes check the rise of a greater enemy. Though it thus sometimes fights on the same side with virtue, it is not in alliance with it. In the direct relation of self-love and self-indulgence to virtue, if both are enemies, the former may be the greater enemy; but the former may be a friend, the latter never can. And, on the other hand, though it is true that a high degree of self-command (which is the opposite of self-indulgence) may consist with a very high degree of moral depravity, there can never be a high degree of virtue without it: while a habit of self-indulgence may be still more reconcilable with extreme depravity, but can never be reconcilable with perfect virtue.

Acting with a systematic care of our own happiness, as already observed, costs more sacrifices of present inclination, than acting for the happiness of others does; and thus what seems the greater virtue may be upheld at the smaller expense. Hence a specious, but cheap and spurious virtue, is that of many persons, who, with a considerable degree of benevolence, are yet under the unrestrained dominion of present appetites and affections, and who seem to be disinterested,

merely because they are weak. Few attain that perfection of virtue, where the present impulse is constantly and promptly sacrificed for the permanent good; and where yet the present and permanent good of self are both apt to be neglected in a regard for the good of other beings.

In the same way as the agent's regard to his own good on the whole, when standing in opposition to his desire of present ease and pleasure, is related to virtue, but when standing in opposition to his regard to the good of all beings generally, is related to the contrary of virtue — so his regard for the good of his own parents, children, relations, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, countrymen, stand, by so many different steps, either as allied to virtue, or as opposed to it, according as they are viewed in relation to the agent's regard for the general good, or for his own private good. Thus the affection of a mother towards her infant, and the sacrifices of personal ease and comfort which that affection prompts, appear to us in the utmost degree amiable. But in so far as the same affection tends to narrow or withdraw all regard for the good of others, and inclines the parent to promote the good of her offspring, not merely at her own expense, but at that of other beings, the affection is decidedly an object of disapprobation.

From this description of what virtue is in itself, and what it necessarily stands opposed to, we may deduce the various features of a virtuous character, — which are not to be considered as so many distinct parts of a compound whole, but merely as different aspects or manifestations of the self-same principle.

A desire for the happiness of other beings necessarily involves,

I. The love and approbation of virtue in other agents (which is just a similar desire in them) and consequently a love and regard for virtuous agents.

II. A hatred and disapprobation of vice in other agents (which is just an indifference or dislike, on their part, to the happiness of sentient beings) and a consequent dislike and indignation towards vicious agents.

Yet the dislike and indignation felt by a virtuous, against a vicious being, for the disregard shewn by the latter for the good of others, cannot entirely annihilate that regard to his happiness, as a living being, which indeed flows from the same virtuous principle. Consequently indignation against the transgressor, for the evil he occasions to others, will be mixed with merciful feeling towards himself.

Nothing can exceed the absurdity of supposing the Deity to possess merely a character of bene-

volence and mercy, in the sense that his acts will never be moved by anger or displeasure. Indignation and wrath against wickedness is so far from being inconsistent with the most perfect benevolence, that it is a necessary part of it; and must always be so much the greater, as benevolence itself is the greater.

It has sometimes been remarked, in regard to the denunciations of the Christian preacher, that they represent the Deity as capable of acts of severity and cruelty from which even a humane and benevolent man would shrink. Without meaning to deny that certain sects and individuals among Christians have, to say the least, gone beyond their plain authority in their denunciations of the divine anger, I would suggest the consideration, founded on the preceding remarks, that the Deity may be, in truth, a more severe avenger of guilt than a humane and benevolent man would be, for this very reason that he is infinitely more humane, and more benevolent, than any *man can be*. For who is it, even in this world, that beholds guilt and villany with the greatest indignation? Who is most intent on bringing the transgressor to punishment? Is it the unprincipled, the immoral man? or is it not, on the contrary, the good, the virtuous man? The adulterer would indeed shew great mercy to another adulterer; the thief would reprove dishonesty with mildness; the murderer

would be a lenient judge of another murderer ; in general, the man who had little regard for moral obligation himself, would be far from thinking it proper that the crimes of others should be visited with severity of punishment. But as, in a human tribunal, the judge is cruel, where the accomplice, or even the bystander, would be humane, so the Judge of all the earth, “ who cannot look on iniquity but with abhorrence,” will indeed be more severe, more rigorous, more unsparing, than the most upright of mankind, who, comparatively speaking, can look upon guilt with complacency and toleration. The mercy of God is not the mere animal sympathy which cannot look at the infliction of pain ; it is not the indolence which will not be troubled with avenging ; it is not the careless goodnature which overlooks or forgets transgression ; it is not the ignorance or perplexity which cannot discern the guilt ; it is not the timidity which fears to commit wrong, and will rather take the safe side. It is the deliberate, purposed, measured abatement of the claims of justice, in respect that the transgressor has repented ; has earnestly and sincerely desired that he had acted otherwise ; has deeply bewailed his infringement of the divine law, and sedulously and anxiously sought amendment. To suppose that the Deity will, in any case, however trifling, grant his pardon, grant the slightest commiseration to sin —

that is to say, while it remains sin,* while it has not been, as it were, unmade, undone again by repentance and amendment — is to suppose the Deity either weak in his nature, or imperfect in his moral purity; is to suppose either that he wants steadiness of purpose to execute his own laws, or that he hates sin with something less than a “perfect hatred,”

A desire for the happiness of other beings involves,

III. A disposition to *think well* of them. Love towards others, (implied in a regard for their happiness,) and a disposition to think well of them, act mutually as cause and effect.

This disposition, farther, may be taken to include *a belief in the sincerity and truth of others*. Easiness of belief, as a feature of intellect, is rather indicative of imbecility and ignorance; as a feature of moral character, it is a virtue; and as such, explains, in part, the nature of religious faith. Belief has been erroneously represented as merely an operation of intellect, and therefore of no *moral* character at all. But while it is true that belief is not voluntary, but dependent on evidence, and, when formed on insufficient evidence,

* I should also say, *if it is really sin* — after all allowances have been made for the ignorance and weakness of the agent, and the constitutional infirmity of his moral principle — for every thing in short that can palliate his guilt.

a mark of weakness, yet it is no less true that a disposition to believe the testimony of other beings, simply as their testimony, rather than to suspect it, (where the evidence for or against may be otherwise equal) is a mark of virtue, and its contrary a mark of vice ; and not only this, but

The essence of a virtuous character or a regard to the happiness of living beings, involves,

IV. A disposition to wish, hope, and believe, that there is a moral government in the universe, by which the interests of virtue will be ultimately promoted, and vice discouraged and repressed. A belief in revelation then, as regards the subject of it, is really an indication of a morally good disposition.* It is needless to remark that both these dispositions, viz. that to trust the sincerity and truth of others, and that to hope and desire that the revelation of a providence and future judgment may be true, are consistent with the most active use of the intellect in sifting and examining the evidences of revelation, and the meaning of the doctrines it conveys.

V. That sort of temper, which, as displayed by inferiors toward superiors in age or intellect, we call *docility*, or, as appearing in the intercourse between equals, *good nature* or *complaisance* — by which is meant a disposition to yield one's own

* “ If any man will do the will of my Father,” said Jesus Christ, “ he will know whether the doctrine be from Heaven.”

will to the will of others — flows directly from the general principle. This disposition evidently implies a prevalent desire to gratify others, a willingness to resign the gratification of one's own wishes or inclinations.

That to which the virtuous principle must, from its nature, stand in opposition, in the character of an agent, is, as has been stated, the agent's desire of pleasure or happiness to himself, whether temporary or permanent; consequently a great degree of the virtuous principle can only consist with a small degree of regard and consideration for self. This part of a virtuous character, or rather negation of the opposite of a virtuous character, involves in it,

I. *A high degree of value put upon any good received.* The less consideration a being has for himself,* the less importance he attaches to his personal concerns, the greater, relatively, does the value of good conferred upon him appear. Hence *contentment, gratitude, &c.*

II. For the same reason, *a small estimation of pains, afflictions, and disappointments.* Hence what are called the *suffering virtues*, patience, resigna-

* Children who, by injudicious displays of fondness and care in the parents, and subserviency from those around, are nursed into an idea of their own importance and value, compared with other beings, may generally be observed to turn out selfish, ungenerous, and illiberal.

tion, submission. The last two imply not merely patience under suffering, but the absence of complaint against the agency by which it is inflicted. This is the effect of a disposition, formerly explained, to think well of the acts of other agents, and to be free from all suspicions of their acting from malevolent or unjust feelings.

III. *A low opinion of self as to virtue and good qualities in general.* Hence an additional help to contentment and resignation, from a feeling of the want of desert; — *humility*, both absolutely and relatively to other beings, co-operating with our positive regard and consideration for them, in preventing us from seeking to raise ourselves above them, or depress them below ourselves.

These remarks cannot fail to recall to the reader the words of St. Paul, descriptive of *charity*, which, in the original, is expressed by a term used to denote a general character of moral excellence, and as such, is said to comprehend in itself all that belongs to the moral nature of the Divine Being. “God is *love*.” It is elsewhere described as the essence of the character which the Deity desires to find in man. On these words I have, undesignedly, been offering a commentary; and viewing them merely as a human composition, they appear to me not more remarkable for the touching simplicity of the expression, than for the philoso-

phical discrimination and comprehensiveness of the sentiment. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things; endureth all things."

Different natural qualities (which, though of an amiable kind, are not to be considered as identical with virtue) are valued by us in similar proportions with those modes of moral virtue, with which respectively such qualities may correspond. We have seen that virtue, as a regard for the good of all, stands opposed, first, to a regard for the good of our country; next, to a regard for the good of our neighbours, acquaintances, relations; next, to a regard for private good; and, as a regard for private good on the whole, to the desire of present pleasure. The natural qualities, then, which coincide with virtue in its most absolute form of existence, are the general benevolent affections, humanity, compassion, sympathy; these accordingly are most valued; next the particular benevolent affections, those of patriotism,* con-

* Patriotism may, for my present purpose, be called a *natural* affection; because, if not naturally an original part of our constitution, it is a natural consequence of other parts.

sanguinity, filial, parental, conjugal love ; next, those qualities which, though not affections towards self, yet as having the good of self for their more direct aim, and generally having their origin in a regard for self, correspond with a moral regard to our greatest private good on the whole ; such as prudence, sobriety, temperance, diligence, caution, activity.

It would be an extreme error to suppose that, in representing the general, as being, more than the particular affections, allied to a virtuous character, it were meant to be maintained that the more a man regarded the happiness of the whole of mankind, and the less he regarded the happiness of his children and immediate connections, he would be the more virtuous. Virtue, it must always be recollected, means a regard to moral obligation, and nothing else ; and we are at present only inquiring what dispositions or affections are, in their nature, most intimately allied with a sense of obligation, whether as cause, effect, or concomitant, or even, if you will, in similarity of outward effects. Now we have found that a sense of obligation has necessarily the effect of making us frequently sacrifice our own good to the good of others, the good of children for that of relations, relations for countrymen, countrymen for men ; and consequently that it must be attended, in some of the ways above enumerated, with a transference

of regard from the nearer to the more distant of those to whom we stand related. Still it remains true that it is more obligatory, more our duty, to do good to the nearer than to the more distant;* and this would seem to warrant a conclusion directly the reverse of what has just been stated. It must be recollected, however, that whenever a sense of obligation fosters one or the narrower affection, it necessarily fosters, in however less a degree, the other or wider; for it is impossible for a man to be influenced by a sense of obligation to do much good to his children, without being also influenced to do some good to all other living beings, and to regard the just rights of the wider, though standing in competition with those of the narrower circle. In one way, then, a sense of obligation has a tendency to depress the more particular, to raise the more general affections; in another, it has a tendency to raise the whole scale, without altering their relative proportion. The last process, of course, does not counteract or nullify the first. So far as the more private affections are instinctive, they are exclusive in their character; and the increase of the narrower, necessarily tends to the diminution of the wider.

* The perception of superior obligation to relatives, &c. is shewn, in the chapter on *obligation*, to be even a consequence of a perception of obligation to promote the good of the whole.

The greater the animal affection a parent bears his children, the less he will regard the good of other beings when it would interfere with the exercise of this affection ; and, *vice versa*, a regard to the good of all beings, must, in its growth, tend to moderate such affection. On the contrary, parental affection, as the result of virtuous principle, cannot increase without the simultaneous increase of all the more general affections.*

But even if the effects of a sense of obligation were the reverse of what are here described, that is, if it tended to raise the particular, and depress the general affections, still a high degree of a general affection would be more indicative of a virtuous character, than a high degree of a particular one ; because the former would imply the latter, the latter need not imply the former. A man who is much influenced by a small obligation, because of its being an obligation, must be more influenced by a great one : a man who is influenced by a great one, may not be influenced by a small one at all. The less an obligation is, the greater must be the virtue of him whom that

* The relative strength of the affections in their natural state, beginning with the more particular, and extending to the more general, may be denoted by a scale of decreasing numbers 9, 6, 3, 2 ; the effect of a sense of obligation is, in one way, to depress nearer to a level, thus, 6, 5, 4, 3 and, in another, to raise the whole, 60, 50, 40, 30.

obligation, small as it is, is yet sufficient to influence.

As it was formerly shewn how obligation might, in every instance, be deduced from the consideration of certain effects, as fit or unfit, so it is now to be remarked, that it is only in regard to the production of an *effect*, that *obligation* can be said to arise ; and that it is incorrect to speak of *virtue* as being *obligatory* — as if we should say that a man *ought to be virtuous*, or that it is his *duty* to be so. To be of moral *obligation*, is the attribute, not of a mental character, but of an *act producing an effect* ; in like manner as to be *virtuous*, is the attribute, not of an act, but of the *mind* of an agent.*

* The title of one of Dr. Adam Smith's chapters, runs as follows ; " In what cases the sense of duty ought to be the sole principle of our conduct, and in what cases it ought to concur with other motives." — If these other motives *ought* at any time to be the principle of our conduct, and if we act from these motives *because they ought* to be the principle of our conduct, we shall still act from a sense of duty : i. e. from a sense of what *we ought* to do. The just mode of expression, as I take it, would have been this : " In what cases conduct proceeding from a sense of duty is most pleasing or agreeable to others ; and in what cases it is most pleasing or agreeable when proceeding from other motives." — If, in another way, we sometimes say that a man *ought*, in certain cases, to trust to his feelings for direction in conduct, (and there are such cases,) we furnish a precept founded on entirely the same principles as

when we direct one to take advice from a parent or instructor, from a physician or a lawyer ; because this happens to be the best *specification of practical duty* — not that there is a *duty*, properly speaking, in being led by our feelings in the one case, more than by the physician, or lawyer, in the other ; but that this is the best *means* of attaining the performance of what is, in itself, our duty.

CHAPTER IV.

OF MERIT.

SECT. I.

*Of the Subject to which the Attribute of Merit belongs, and
of the Nature of that Attribute.*

HAVING thus described the *dispositions* which form the *virtue* of an agent, I am next to consider the *acts* of *choice* or *volition* for which we ascribe to him the attribute of *merit*.

When we say that certain dispositions make an agent virtuous, we merely give a definition of virtue; when we say that an agent who *wills* in a certain manner has *merit*, we express both a definition and a judgment or proposition: we not only say that we give the name of merit to a certain attribute conceived to belong to the agent who thus wills; but our ascribing of this attribute to him is really a *judgment* that *he deserves*, or that it is fit that he should obtain, reward. It is the origin and nature of this judgment that I am now to describe.

In the process of evolving our mental conceptions, we find the notions of merit and guilt to be ultimately contained in those of happiness and misery. It is impossible to form the notion of these in the mind, without perceiving that happiness, in its very nature, is something *fit* to be promoted — misery something fit to be prevented. The perception that a thing is fit to be done, necessarily involves the perception that it is proper or right in an agent to do it, that it is what he ought to do, what it is obligatory on him to do. But it is impossible to perceive that there is something an agent ought or ought not to do, without its being implied in such perception, that his *state ought to be better* if he wills to do what he ought, and worse, if he does not will to do what he ought : and better in the one case, in the ratio of the strength of the volition ; worse in the other case, in proportion to the want of volition.

Whatever we conceive as done by an exercise of free will, we must suppose as what would not have taken place otherwise, that is, without such exercise of free will, or wilful choice : we suppose, in other words, that it is not what the agent would have done, acting *spontaneously*, from the impulse of the present disposition, affection, or desire. For an agent to have merit, then, we must conceive that he does not act merely from inclination.

On the other hand, in attributing *demerit* to an agent for not willing or choosing in a particular

manner, we necessarily suppose that he might have so willed; for by his not willing, in such a case, we do not speak merely as of a matter of fact, the negation of another matter of fact (as we might speak of a stone's not willing) but of the negative exercise of a power of which the agent is conscious. In the other sense, to speak of his not willing, when he could not will, would be a contradiction in terms. As merit then cannot attach to an agent for what he does from positive inclination, not requiring the exercise of free will, so demerit cannot attach to him for what he does under the pressure of a motive excluding the exercise of free will. The exercise of free will may be either positive or negative, but still it must be an *exercise*—the agent either choosing to do what he would not otherwise have done, or not choosing to do what he might have done; so that *not willing* must be an act of choice as well as *willing*.

In order fully to comprehend the nature of merit and demerit, we must draw a complete separation between the nature of an agent and his acts. The former does not consist in what he does, but in what he is; the latter do not consist in what he is, but in what he does.*

Certainly we have a conception of an agent's

* It is obvious that by *what he does*, I do not here mean the outward act, but the inward act of will, as distinguished from the passive inclination.

having a *nature* which he did not make for himself; we have a conception of his being possessed of various dispositions, affections, or propensions; a liability to be affected by this, or that kind of motives, — which he did not create by his own choice, but which are qualities belonging to his existence, however originating. We also distinctly conceive of one inclination or disposition, that it may be stronger than another, and more proper to influence the will of the agent; so that the will shall follow the stronger spontaneously, and without effort, and indeed unless an effort is made to the contrary; but shall not so follow the weaker, or oppose the stronger, but with an effort.

Where an agent merely follows the stronger inclination, he is not to be reckoned as exercising the power of free will otherwise than negatively, — whether he may possess it or not. If the inferior animals can be said to possess the power of free will at all, which may be doubted, it would seem to be only in those cases where they are under the dominion of no present inclination, or at least of no one inclination more than another.

Now it is obvious that for the *nature* of an agent, or the dispositions, affections, or qualities, comprehended in that nature, whether exciting attachment or dislike, or whatever may be their relative strength, we cannot deem him answerable, or as deserving either of reward or punishment. His desert of the one or of the other of these can only be-

long to that exercise of *free will*, positive or negative, which the state or balance of his dispositions leaves in his power. It is only then for what an agent *does*, not for what he *is*, that he can have merit or demerit.

From the description of *virtue* given in the preceding chapter, it must appear to be, in its nature, a *disposition*, exercising, so far as it goes, and so long as it exists, a steady influence on conduct, and carrying us more or less in one way rather than another, independently of any effort of will. A regard to moral obligation too, is undoubtedly a thing of *degree*; and there is nothing whatever to prevent us from supposing that it may, by original creative power, be constituted strong or weak, or afterwards increased or lessened by external agency or external circumstances; so that a being might be no more responsible for the *degree* of his sensibility to moral obligation, than for the degree of his sensibility to the charms of music.

The effect of early education in nourishing the virtuous principle, is not matter of doubt. If we see one child trained in a virtuous, another in a vicious course, we can foretel, almost as certainly as we can foretel the different effects of cultivating or not cultivating a field, that the one will have a regard to moral obligation, the other will not. But surely, when, at maturity, they exhibit this difference of character, we do not consider the one as entitled to reward, the other as deserving of

punishment, for what we know to have been the effect of external circumstances in each, — so that had they exchanged places, they would have exchanged characters also. I do not say that this *must* be so ; it is sufficient for my purpose if it may be so, or even may be conceived to be so, — that one being may be virtuous, another vicious, without any merit belonging to the one, or demerit to the other.

A sensibility to moral obligation (which can only characterize rational beings) must always be distinguished from those natural affections, propensities, or qualities, which may belong to irrational creatures ; but so far as a moral character is born with, or formed in an agent, and a part of his very nature and constitution, without any act of his own, it is, in this respect, the same with mere animal dispositions or instincts, that, though it may excite, as the case may be, love or dislike, approbation or disapprobation, it can never seem *deserving of reward or punishment*. Thus we love the docility of the horse, the meekness and simplicity of the lamb, the faithfulness of the dog : we caress and feed some animals from fondness of their qualities, from admiration of their beautiful forms, and even from gratitude for benefits which they have done us ; we hate the capricious ferocity of the bull, the cruelty of the tiger, the obstinacy of the hog ; yet we never think of treating the acts or qualities of these animals as subjects of

reward or punishment, of moral *retribution*: we never think they *deserve* this or that treatment. And although we occasionally submit the inferior animals to discipline, although we beat a dog for stealing, a horse for starting, we merely, in such cases, make use of the animal instinct which leads them to avoid pain, by connecting it, in their experience, with those of their acts that are disagreeable or pernicious to us.

To be a moral agent at all, supposes the power of distinguishing between right and wrong. But we can conceive a being constituted with a sensibility to obligation so weak, that it will be perpetually overcome by opposing inclinations, and in effect, have no influence on his conduct. This we may call the lowest state of moral depravity — (for an attachment to vice for its own sake, is hardly conceivable) — as, on the other hand, we may call that the highest state of moral excellence, in which the perception of moral obligation immediately and unfailingly annihilates every opposing motive.

Between these two opposite states, we can imagine a middle point, at which a motive of a certain strength might stand opposed to duty in such a manner, that the will of an agent would not spontaneously incline to the one side more than to the other; and, on each side of this point, different degrees of the virtuous principle or of the want of it; so that, on one side of the scale, the virtuous

principle would more and more overbalance the temptation, and on the other side, the temptation would, by similar degrees, overbalance the virtuous principle.

Now, if we suppose two or more moral agents placed at any of those points of the scale where the virtuous principle is less than the opposing motive, or only equal to it, we can suppose some of them to make a *voluntary exertion* to do what they perceived they ought to do, and others not to make this exertion. The employment of this exertion constitutes *merit*, the omission of it *guilt*.

Were we to adopt the phraseology of the necessarians, we should say that, in every case where, in acting from a regard to duty, we overcome a present inclination, a regard to duty is really the stronger motive. It is unnecessary to quarrel about a term ; but no two notions are more perfectly or familiarly distinguishable from one another, than that of acting according to, and that of acting against inclination. These two things are different in fact ; and if, in both cases, an agent must be said to follow the stronger motive, it must be in a different sense in each case respectively.* Every one, however, knows what is meant by acting contrary to, or without present

* In one of these senses, as will afterwards be shewn, the doctrine of necessity is not true ; in the other, it is but an identical proposition.

inclination, and this only I call a positive exercise of free will.

It is true there is such a thing as acting contrary to an inclination without an exercise of free will ; but this is where one inclination overcomes another ; and where, consequently, the weaker ceases to be the inclination ; and the agent, in acting contrary to it, still acts spontaneously, and, to all intents and purposes, according to inclination. A man will pass through the fire, to save his life or that of his children. A mother will persist in tending her sick infant in spite of pain, fatigue, and privation. Yet, in such cases, so far is inclination from being overcome by an effort, that it would require an effort to act differently. Even the inferior animals will incur sacrifices in this manner. There is obviously nothing, then, in such instances, of the nature of self-control, self-denial ; nothing resembling what a rational agent does in opposing temptation from virtuous principle, or in restraining some urgent desire, affection or emotion, from a belief that it will conduce to some distant, and perhaps dimly conceived advantage.

To an agent, then, who *wills* to do what he ought, not being otherwise disposed to do so than merely that he wills it, we ascribe the attribute of *merit*, or desert of reward.

Further, we have a distinct conception of a volition's being *strong* or *weak* ; and the reward we

perceive to be due to an agent for willing what is obligatory, is in proportion to the strength of the volition he makes. Now, from the nature of the things considered, it must appear that a volition is stronger, first, Where the agent wills the fulfilment of a smaller obligation, than where he only wills the fulfilment of a greater: and, secondly Where he wills the performance of obligation against a stronger, than only against a weaker opposing motive. In plainer words, we do not attribute so much merit to a man for choosing to fulfil a great obligation, or one which costs him little difficulty, as we would in the contrary of each case respectively.

At first sight, and previously to experience, we might suppose that a rational agent would always be *inclined* to act with a regard to his own greatest good, and consequently that he could never, by present sacrifices incurred with that view, acquire *merit*. The fact, however, we know to be otherwise. The question in regard to such cases is simply this — Is the prospect of the future greater good sufficient to move him *spontaneously*, and without any effort of free will, to sacrifice the present inclination, in the same way as it would be if both were equally present? If it is not, he may have *merit* for the volition. A man may be quite convinced that, by submitting at present to a painful surgical operation, he will save himself a greater quantity of pain afterwards. He will of course

feel that he ought to submit to it, nay, may be anxious that he could bring himself to submit; yet this submission may be so far from *spontaneous*, that it may require the greatest effort of resolution; and, I repeat, there is a plain distinction (on the neglect of which hangs the doctrine of necessity) between a man's doing a thing, because it is his inclination, and because it is his will.

Nor does it necessarily remove, though it may lessen the merit, that a reward may be promised for submitting to some present pain. The prospect of this reward either makes the submission spontaneous, or it does not. If an effort of will is still required, there will still be merit.

And though the merit of an agent is of so far an inferior kind, as the effort of will is made merely with a view to his own good, yet in respect that very great difficulty may attend such effort, the merit may, on the whole, be far from inconsiderable. The employment of active exertion then by an agent, for his own good, admits, from this circumstance, of a superior estimation to what can belong to self-love, considered merely as a *disposition*. — Indeed in whatever way, or for whatever purpose, a strong exertion of the will is made, it is proper of itself to excite some degree of respect and admiration.

I have already had occasion* to distinguish the perception of merit and demerit in an agent, from

* Vol. I. page 80.

the mere affections of love and dislike towards him ; and also from a knowledge of the uses of reward and punishment in promoting virtue and restraining vice. Reward and punishment, in the proper notion of them, are something *fitly due* to an agent in regard to *past* conduct, and to that of itself, independently of all other considerations. It is obvious that no advantage that could arise from the view of the punishment of an individual, could possibly make that punishment just, unless he were the guilty individual; and that, if he were guilty, his punishment might be *just*, even if tending to no advantage.

We must, however, always perceive a fitness why any living being, merely as such, should be happy rather than miserable. This so far opposes the other perception of the fitness that a guilty agent should suffer, that the latter cannot well maintain itself abstractedly from the view of some good produced by such suffering, either to the sufferer or to others : but this, whether the good is produced by the actual suffering, endured or beheld, in any particular case, or by the general constitution by which suffering is connected with moral guilt.

SECT. II.

On the Distinction between Virtue and Merit.

We shall now be enabled to discover the relation which virtue and merit mutually bear to each other.

The *virtue* of an agent is his disposition, independently of any exercise of will or choice, to do what he ought to do. — This disposition we can easily imagine any number of agents to be formed with originally, or to receive or to acquire afterwards, in different degrees: and in whatever degree each agent may possess such disposition, he is *virtuous*.

The *merit* of an agent, on the other hand, belongs to him for willing or choosing to do what he ought, independently of disposition or inclination to do so: and in proportion to the strength or energy with which he so wills, is his *merit*.

Now it is obvious that, other things being the same, the greater a man's disposition is, the more he is *inclined* spontaneously to do what he ought, the less must be his *exertion of will* employed for that purpose. Virtue and merit then are so far from being the same, that they are essentially exclusive of one another. And if an agent's sensibility to moral obligation is so great that he will spontaneously act upon it whatever other inclinations may oppose, that is, if regard to what he

ought to do is always the strongest motive, the will is not exercised, and merit cannot exist.

If the notion of merit and guilt now presented be correct, it must follow,

I. That merit can only belong to an *imperfect* being ; and that some state between absolute moral perfection and absolute depravity can alone be fitted for a state of moral probation.

If a being is, by the necessity of his nature, exempted from the possibility of doing wrong, he possesses the highest degree of moral excellence, and is the proper subject of adoration, love and reverence—but he cannot be said to be the subject of *reward*. The Deity is raised, by the supreme perfection of his nature, above the possibility of merit. This is no more detracting from his moral excellence, than it is detracting from the notion of his happiness to say that he cannot enjoy the pleasure of being released from pain. It has been advanced as a paradox, that a man may have more merit than an angel : the consideration now stated explains this. He may have more *merit*—but, for this very reason, must be inferior in moral virtue.

On the other hand, a being, who, by the necessity of his nature, (if such a being can exist,) is averse to the influence of moral obligation, and incapable of all exertion for its fulfilment, can have no *guilt*. He may be the object of fear, contempt, and detestation—but he cannot be said to *deserve*

punishment. However our feelings towards him may prompt us to vent our indignation in the infliction of suffering, our deliberate and calm judgment will tell us that to impose such suffering would be cruel and unjust. In the same way, when, on sudden provocation, we are about to wreak our vengeance on a brute, who, in following a natural instinct, may have seriously injured us, we check ourselves by the reflection, that the transgression implied no fault in the creature who committed it, such as to carry along with it the desert of punishment.

II. That a being of a depraved nature may have more merit than one of a virtuous nature: the merit not consisting in the place of the scale possessed by each, but in the degree in which he has raised himself above it. The degree of absolute moral excellence is the talent; the merit is the improvement made in its value. In the same way, a good being may have more *guilt* than a bad one.

III. Merit and guilt are each *incommunicable*. We may pray to the Deity to increase the degree of our holiness and virtue, to make us more sensible to duty, more superior to temptation, or to be less exposed to it. By our prayer's being granted, we may become more *virtuous* moral agents, but we acquire no *merit*—unless what we may have had in urging the prayer. In the same way, a being, as a punishment of his actual guilt,

may be allowed to fall into greater degrees of *depravity*. But he does not in consequence become *more guilty*. The same remark applies to the improvement or deterioration which one man, by advice or example, may effect in the moral character of another.

IV. A being who, by repeated voluntary exertions, acquires a habit and character of virtue, which leads to the spontaneous fulfilment of duty, becomes, in proportion, a more excellent moral being; but, in the same proportion, loses merit: the last consisting in the original exertion by which his virtuous habits were induced. In the same way, the guilt of a being ceases in proportion as his conscience becomes hardened and callous; but he remains liable to punishment for the original wilful deviation from rectitude, by the repetition of which his wicked habits have at length become unconquerable. We would not punish a drunken man for crimes committed in that state, but for the guilt of falling into such a state, aggravated as that guilt might be by the probability, present to his mind, that the indulging in drunkenness would lead to the commission of crime.

I know of no objection that will lie against the truth of the distinction between *virtue* and *merit*, *vice* and *guilt*, now insisted upon, except the apparent paradoxes which it seems to establish. But these can only arise from assigning to the terms of certain propositions, meanings different from those

which they have here been restricted to express. Such apparent paradoxes I presume I have satisfactorily explained. I may again remark, once for all, that, instead of its being a derogation from the character of a virtuous being, to deny him the possession of *merit*, (in the sense to which I have limited the meaning of the term,) it may be the highest glory his virtue can receive; since it expresses the stability; the certainty, the perfection of his virtue. All that he loses is the praise of not *exerting* himself to act virtuously: a praise which may well be exchanged for that of being so virtuous by *inclination* as not to require exertion: and the possession of a title to both at once, being, in the nature of things, an impossibility.

If each of two men were required to raise a certain weight, we should no doubt give one species of praise and credit, and also think reward due, (if reward were allowed at all,) to him who *exerted* himself to raise it, rather than to him who did not exert himself. But certainly if one of them could raise it without exertion at all, we should give him a praise of a different species — namely, that of being the *stronger man*. And, in like manner as we should prefer a great degree of bodily strength to the mere merit of supplying the want of it by greater degrees of exertion — and we cannot have both at once — so the possession of those confirmed habits of virtue which render a man absolutely unassailable by tempta-

tion, must be more glorious and valuable than the praise of having successfully endured such temptation.

I think I have heard it mentioned of Sir Isaac Newton, that, in pursuing his mathematical studies, he scarcely stopped to examine the demonstrations of Euclid, but perceived, as by a glance, how the conclusion would flow from the premises. Who would surrender an intellect of this kind for the credit due to many humbler minds, on account of the hard study and persevering diligence with which they have, at length, mastered those ingenious chains of reasoning?

Or again, who would think that he was derogating from the glory of God's omnipotence, by saying that the creation of the universe cost him no trouble?

It is of the very nature, then, of absolute and perfect excellence, to be beyond the possibility of obtaining any of that sort of praise, which belongs to endeavours to attain that excellence, employed by those who fall short of it.

SECT. III.

Theoretical and practical Uses of the Distinction between Virtue and Merit.

THE distinction between *virtue* and *merit*, though not I believe introduced into common language, is not merely one of curiosity, but of theoretical and practical use. It is indeed absolutely neces-

sary, in order to enable us to express with precision two distinct notions that occur to our minds, in forming certain judgments on the conduct of moral agents.

Suppose a man to be placed in some circumstance of great difficulty and embarrassment, from which he has the means of extricating himself by an act, which, though secure from detection or punishment, is of a very heinous moral character ; but suppose that so fixed and steady is his moral principle, that the idea of committing such act never enters into his thoughts at all, or, if it does, is immediately dismissed without doubt, hesitation, or difficulty : — suppose another in the same situation, not liable, from any circumstance in his condition at the time, to feel the temptation more, but, from the mere want of moral principle, entertaining the desire of profiting by the opportunity presented to him, balancing between this desire and his sense of duty, now yielding to the immoral inclination, next by an effort overcoming it, and with difficulty persevering in his resolution : — which of these two should we say had the greater *virtue* ? which the greater *merit* ? To each we should give one species of praise ; but surely we should praise different qualities in each : and if these qualities are the subject of different notions in our minds, we require terms descriptive of each, whether those I have adopted or others.

It is needless to produce more illustrations to

this purpose, since it is easy for any one to imagine a multitude of cases in which the difference of temptation respectively felt by two agents, arises, not from the object's being less desirable to the one than to the other, either in its own nature, or in relation to the tastes, inclinations, or wants of the parties, but solely from the *greater power of the virtuous principle* in one than in another. It is well known that the strength and urgency of any desire is generally proportioned to the degree in which the means of its gratification is apprehended to be within our reach ; insomuch that what is impossible is not desired at all. Hence every man is anxious for a few pounds, or a few hundreds more in the year ; no man, in a low condition, is anxious about being a king, or prince of the blood, or of possessing ten thousand per annum. Now the perception of a thing's being utterly *wrong*, is felt, by a man of confirmed principle, to interpose a barrier to his wishes of the nature of a physical impossibility ; and consequently annihilates, or rather prevents, desire. It has been remarked that no man ever falls desperately in love with a woman so much raised above his own condition as to make the possession of her obviously unattainable. No virtuous man, for a similar reason, — namely, from an apprehended impossibility of success, founded in its being *wrong* to attempt it, — will ever fall in love with his neighbour's wife, or have the *merit* of resisting an inclination to seduce her.

But the necessity of the distinction between merit and virtue, guilt and depravity, may be made farther apparent from this circumstance, that the neglect of it is what has involved some moral theorists in no less a contradiction than that of asserting, first, that the notion of free agency is absolutely essential to that of virtue and depravity; and yet again, that the highest degree of virtue or depravity is that in which we conceive the agent to lie under a moral impossibility of doing otherwise. It could not be expected that so glaring a contradiction would escape the attention of even less piercing intellects, than some of those that have been employed in defence of the doctrine of *necessity*. Accordingly Dr. Priestley at once lights upon certain passages, to the effect now described, which are unluckily to be found in Dr. Price's generally accurate work; and his triumph in the exposure of their inconsistency is complete.

“By the necessity which is said to diminish the merit of good actions,” says Dr. Price, “must be meant, not a natural, (which would take away the whole idea of action and will,) but a moral necessity, or such as arises from the influence of motives and affections on the mind; or that certainty of determining one way which may take place upon supposition of certain views, circumstances, and principles of an agent. Now it is undeniable, that the very greatest necessity of this sort is consistent with, nay, is implied in, the idea of the

most perfect and meritorious virtue ; and consequently, can by no means lessen it." — " In like manner, the most abandoned and detestable state of wickedness implies the greatest necessity of sinning, and the greatest degree of moral impotence."

On this passage, Priestley comments as follows :

" As a professed necessarian, I would not wish to use any other language than this." — " But how this agrees with what he observes in another place, I do not see. He says, ' It has always been the general, and it has evidently been the natural sense of mankind, that they cannot be accountable for what they have no power to avoid. Nothing can be more absurd than applauding or reproaching ourselves for what we were no more the cause of than of our own being, and what it was no more possible for us to prevent than the return of the season, or the revolutions of the planets.' This is so expressed, as if the disposition of mind, which is one necessary cause of men's resolutions and actions, was not at all concerned ; but taking in this circumstance, to which Dr. Price himself allows a certain and necessary operation, that which he here calls a glaring absurdity, is precisely his own principle, unless he will say that a man is not accountable for the most abandoned and detestable wickedness, which, he expressly says, implies the greatest necessity of sinning."

Now it is easily seen that the distinction be-

tween *virtue* and *merit* entirely saves the contradiction thus triumphantly exposed, and at the same time affords no handle to the advocate for necessity. It is not the ideas of moral virtue and depravity that are repugnant to the doctrine of necessity, but those of merit and guilt, reward and punishment. The very best or the very worst moral agents (i.e. the most *virtuous* or the most *depraved*) are those who are virtuous or depraved unavoidably, from the strength of their good or their evil principles or dispositions : but then the one cannot deserve reward, nor the other punishment. On the other hand, beings who can justly deserve reward or punishment, can never be those who are under the necessary dominion of motives or dispositions, whether good or bad.

The confusion and irresolution of thought which Dr. Price discovers in his treatment of this subject, — sometimes arguing ineffectually for the necessity of trials to virtue, and sometimes denying it, — has obviously arisen from comprehending, under one term, or under synonymous terms, two different notions of the mind, the truths that hold good regarding one of which, are entirely irreconcilable with those that hold good regarding the other. Thus, when the idea of *virtue* presented itself to the author's mind, he has clearly seen, that, so far from owing its existence to the circumstance of its experiencing trials, the very possibility of its experiencing trial could only consist

with the supposition of its imperfection. On the other hand, when the idea of merit occurred, it was as evidently seen, that without trial, and consequently without imperfect virtue, merit could not so much as be conceived of; since it entirely depends on the degree of exertion employed by the agent in sustaining trial.

If this elucidation of the inconsistencies now pointed out be satisfactory, the following passage from Dr. Price will require some correction.

“ From these observations also it appears, that what has been said of the extenuation of guilt by the strength of temptations must be understood with some restrictions. For, that temptations are strong, may argue nothing more, than that our power of resistance is weak; that the spring of virtue (the contrary force in our minds which should repel them) is relaxed and broken. How wretched an excuse then for vice is this, as it is frequently pleaded.”

The distinction here drawn by Dr. Price between the strength of a temptation in itself, and that which it possesses by reason of the moral weakness of an agent, is just, and of essential importance. But it is upon the quantity of exertion employed, that the merit of the agent, I conceive, entirely depends; and it matters not in the very slightest degree, whether the necessity of the exertion arises from the weakness of an agent, or the strength of the trial, provided merely this

weakness be in his nature or character at the time. Whether it is, or is not, the effect of former wilful relaxations, is another question : these relaxations are different actions from the present, and must be tried on their own merits. We suppose his virtue, at this present time, to be weak ; and I see no reason why its weakness should be a deduction from his present merit, since that weakness enhances the power of temptation. It is allowed by Dr. Price that, without a defect in the virtuous principle, there could be no trial of a man's virtue ; of course, if we allow an extenuation of guilt only where it is from no defect in the virtue of the agent that the temptation derives its strength, we can allow no extenuation at all.

Supposing the absolute temptation the same, that agent is the most virtuous who overcomes it with the greatest ease ; that one, on the contrary, the most meritorious, who does so with the greatest exertion : but his virtue must be the less, or there would not have been occasion for this exertion. One agent may have as much merit in overcoming a small, as another in overcoming a great temptation—but the virtue of the former must be the less. The exertion it may cost a man to raise a heavy body, may either arise from the weight of the body, or the weakness of the man. So far as we give him credit simply for the exertion, we do not mind how it is occasioned.

There is much similitude, in this respect, be-

tween moral virtue, and intellectual power. Both may be improved by culture, and deteriorated by neglect. And there seems no reason why there may not be different original degrees of the one, as well as the other. The more easily a man comprehends a difficulty, we say his capacity is the greater. When he uses exertion to comprehend it, we give him equal praise for this exertion, whether it is required from the difficulty of the matter he considers, or from his own feebleness of capacity.

The doctrine, now illustrated will enable us to try the merits of a certain theological system, much in vogue in the present day, and which appears to me to be founded upon a very gross, but well masked fallacy.

The system I allude to represents the nature of man as entirely corrupt and sinful; in consequence of which he is constantly bent on evil, and quite incapable of good: that this nature is born with him, and that he can do nothing of himself to amend or alter it: that any improvement of this nature, or removal of its corruption, can only be the effect of divine interference: that this interference, when it does take place, has no respect to any merit in those for whom it is exerted; and that those to whom it does not extend, are liable, and *justly* liable, to eternal and infinite punishment, in a future world.

Not to involve myself in theological controversy,

I shall state the only two suppositions, on this subject, which I can conceive possible to be true ; without, in the meantime, either admitting or denying the truth of any of them.

I. A race of beings, such as mankind, may have been so created originally, or, by some act of the common progenitor, allowed to fall into such a state, that, in their dispositions and conduct, they may be entirely opposed to the influence of moral obligation — still allowing them to be moral agents, i. e. capable of distinguishing right from wrong : and such beings may be entirely unable to do any thing that is right, or to avoid what is wrong. The creator of such a race may, without any reason but his own will, select any number of those beings, and transform their nature from vice to virtue ; and those beings, so transformed, may be capable of enjoying greater happiness, and of being more exempt from misery, than the remaining part of their species, and be actually made to enjoy a preferable condition. — There are analogies in nature which could make this a possible case.

II. A race of beings, such as man, may exist, who, without being under an entire inability to perform duty, or to avoid sin, may yet have many evil dispositions and propensities, and be liable to many temptations ; their moral principle, at the same time, may be too weak to counterbalance opposing motive ; — and, though capable of effec-

tual exertion, for the avoiding of transgression, and the fulfilment of duty, they may yet, *in point of fact*, fail to use such exertion, and be constantly sinning.

Now you may adopt either the one or the other of these hypotheses, as expressing the condition of man; but, if you stand by the first supposition, you must entirely give up the notion of man's being justly liable to punishment, consistently with any idea we can have of justice; or, if you choose the second, you must, in like manner, give up the notion of his being under any necessity of sinning, or under any incapacity of doing what is right. According to both suppositions, the nature of man may be called sinful: but, in the one case, his actions are sinful, because his nature is so;—in the other, his nature is sinful, because his actions are so. In the one case, his sinful nature is the cause; in the other, it is the effect of his sinful actions. In both cases, suffering, or diminution of happiness, may be connected with this sinful nature,—but in different ways:—in the one, it must be merely a consequence; in the other, it may be a judicial infliction. In both cases too, we must conceive of such beings as objects of dislike: it is only in the second case, that we can reckon them deserving of blame or punishment. In short, they may be *depraved* in the first case; they can be *guilty*, only in the second.

Or you may adopt a part of each supposition:

you may call the evil actions of man partly necessary, as the effect of his nature ; and partly voluntary, as the acts of his will. But still, in whatever degree you hold his actions liable to punishment, you must hold them free and within his own power ; in whatever degree they were not in his own power, he ceases to have guilt, or to be justly liable to punishment. Turn the matter how you will, you can only have as much of the one supposition as you give up of the other. To say that a being may be *depraved*, and unable to be otherwise, may be quite consistent with truth : — to say that he is *guilty* (that he is *deserving of punishment*) and *unable to be otherwise*, — is just as gross a contradiction as words can be formed to express.

Nor does it in the smallest degree mend the matter to say, that the necessity of sinning — the inability to do good, here supposed — is not a physical, but a moral necessity. — If it is a *necessity* at all, in any sense, in any meaning or acceptance whatsoever in which that term can, by any possibility, be taken, — it is inconsistent with the idea of guilt or *desert of punishment*. — In vain are we told that the actions of men are still perfectly free, insomuch as no constraint is put on their inclinations — that they have full power to follow their natural dispositions, but that their inclinations and dispositions are all sinful. — If these inclinations or dispositions are part of a *nature*

which the agent did not make for himself, *by his own will*, — and if they *necessarily* affect his volitions — he can have no more guilt than if his actions were directed by mechanical force. In fact, it is only by assimilating the operation of motives on the mind, to the operation of mechanical forces, that the subjection of the will to motives can be maintained or explained ; and therefore it is fully agreed, by those who have best considered the subject, both on the side of necessity and on that of free will, that the distinction between moral and physical necessity is entirely groundless.

But it is said that all that is necessary to the idea of guilt or desert of punishment, is, that the inclinations and dispositions* of man are sinful, —

* It is a feature of the system I have been considering, that well deserves remark, that, while its advocates always represent those inclinations of man which lead to sin (such as the sensual appetites and passions) as deserving of punishment, — they allow no merit to those other inclinations (such as the feelings of natural affection and humanity) which lead him to what is right. — Can any thing be more unfair than this ? If the one description of qualities make man corrupt and wicked, do not the other make him amiable and good ? But it is said that it is not from a regard to virtue — from a regard to God's will — that men perform acts of natural affection and kindness. — But is it from a regard to vice, is it from a desire to oppose God's will, that men give way to sensuality and intemperance ? — Whence then the preposterous, the insane raving, about human depravity — the more than childish ringing of changes upon “ the depth of our corruption,” “ our utter and desperate wickedness,” and so forth. — Are we to set a scriptural figure

that in his nature and character, he is opposed to the influence of moral obligation : it is even said that the guilt is just so much the greater, that the vicious character is inbred, and beyond his power of altering. — This is denied : — and here lies the fallacy which lurks at the bottom of the doctrine under consideration, and gives it all its plausibility — a fallacy which consists in the confounding together of the two different ideas of *disposition* and *choice*. — The more it is a man's choice to be wicked, the more is he liable to punishment ; — the more it is his disposition, the less so. The strength of his *choice* to do right — if he *does* right — is directly as the strength of his *disposition* to do wrong ; and by the choice — not by the disposition — will he be judged worthy of reward or punishment. — The question here, let it be observed, is simply this : — what is it, in the com-

of speech against a plain matter of fact ? — What is the truth ? This : that neither does a man's moral virtue consist in his benevolent natural affections, nor his moral depravity in his selfish or sensual inclinations ; — that his depravity (and it is so great as to require no fanciful and hypocritical exaggerations) consists in his insensibility to the moral obligation which he lies under to regulate and control his natural propensities : — and that his desert of punishment arises neither from his natural appetites, nor the constitutional weakness of his sensibility to obligation, but *from the wrong exercise of his free will*, in choosing to neglect or violate moral obligation — not being under the *necessary* dominion of motives, leading to such neglect or violation.

mon and immediate apprehensions, feelings, or judgments of mankind in general, that renders a moral agent a just object of *punishment*? — This is all the standard of justice we have; and the standard to which the Deity must be understood to refer, when he reveals himself to us as a *perfectly just being*: — for to suppose that the Deity makes this declaration in a different sense from what it will be understood by those to whom it is addressed, — to suppose that what he calls justice in speaking to men, is not what they naturally consider as justice, — is to suppose that he deceives them. And upon this point it is that issue is joined, — namely, what, in the common feelings, apprehensions, or judgments of mankind, constitutes guilt, in the sense of *desert of punishment*?

Now it may be quite true in general, as maintained by the advocates of the doctrine under examination, that all that we ask, when we would consider whether or not an agent is a fit subject of resentment or punishment, is merely, — was his act *voluntary*? — But if, while it is said that a wrong action, voluntarily committed, constitutes the agent guilty, it is also said that the guilt is the greater, according to the degree in which the act is voluntary; and if it is at the same time meant, that the act is in the greater degree voluntary, the more powerful the *motive*, — i. e. the disposition, inclination, or desire, that operates on the will, — this is so far from being true, that the:

very reverse is true. Does the greatness of a *temptation*, in any case, increase, or does it lessen guilt? Surely there can be no dispute upon this point. But what means the greatness of a temptation, but the greatness of the *inclination* or *disposition*, the strength of the *motive*, to act in a particular manner. Surely the more powerful the strength of an inclination to sin, the less, and not the greater, do we reckon the guilt of him who yields to that inclination. How is it possible then to maintain, that, in proportion as evil dispositions are *irresistible*, the being who (without any act of his own) possesses such dispositions, is deserving of punishment? Nor does it in the least alter the case, when the temptation is supposed to be strong, in respect that the agent's moral principle is constitutionally or habitually weak. — Expose a virtuous and a vicious man to the same temptation, — which should we think the most deserving of punishment for yielding to it, — which the most deserving of reward for resisting it? — that is, solely in regard to that particular act. — And is not the whole responsibility of man, a responsibility for a number of particular acts, under all the circumstances in which *free will* was exercised in each case respectively?

If then the strength of an evil inclination (or, which is the same, the natural infirmity of opposing virtuous principles) excuses, rather than the contrary, — if the weakness of an evil inclination

takes away excuse rather than the contrary, — must not the absolutely unconquerable strength of an evil inclination, the absolute powerlessness of the opposing virtuous principle, remove guilt altogether? Is it then at all possible, that a being either physically or morally incapable of willing to do his duty, can be justly punished? — unless we simply mean by *morally incapable*, that he in fact never wills to do his duty, although capable of willing it: — which is of course giving up all that is contended for.

Or, I would just ask, — is there not at least *one sense*, in which the more incapable a being is of avoiding sin, (incapable whether from the strength of temptation, or his own weakness,) the more we should pity him for falling into sin, the harder, the more cruel, we should think his punishment, if he were punished? And if there is such a sense, wherein does it differ from that in which the incapacity is said to increase the desert of punishment? — Let the two cases be respectively exemplified.

To meet some conceivable statements that might be made on the opposite side, as drawn from a consideration of the nature of human jurisprudence, it may be observed,

I. That human laws in general have not a retributive aim. Their purpose is, by the terror of example, to prevent new crimes. Their establishment is therefore entirely consistent with the scheme of necessity; and if the fear of punish-

ment acts in the way of a counteracting cause to the influence of temptations leading to crime, men may apply this counteracting cause just on the same principle as they apply counteracting causes to natural operations by which they are injured ; and we may prevent a man from robbing us, by threatening him with punishment, just as we prevent a river from overflowing us, by opposing embankments to it : —and this must, of course, be allowed to be another way, in addition to those already mentioned, in which suffering may be connected with moral depravity : but still, not in the sense of *retributive justice*.

II. Human laws cannot distinguish between those cases where the will of the criminal was free to choose, and those where the natural disposition with which he was born, the habits under which he was educated, or other peculiar circumstances, exerted a necessary influence over his will ; nor, if the administrators of the laws could thus distinguish, might it be safe to entrust them with a discretionary power to qualify their judgments accordingly.

III. Human laws always presume, (erroneously —if we may credit those with whom I am arguing —but still they cannot deny the fact,) that the criminal never was under either a moral, or a physical inability, to avoid the crime ; and although they require evidence of a *bad motive* to constitute the crime, it is not because the crimi-

nal *had* a bad motive that he is deemed guilty, but because *he chose to follow* that motive. Certainly the motive is never considered as acting on the will of the criminal in the way of cause and necessary effect. The will is presumed to accompany the motive, not to be forcibly dragged by it; and in all cases where a sufficiently broad distinction can be instituted between an act of free will, and one of ungovernable passion, the criminal has the benefit of this distinction.

But, in the last place — after the crime has been legally established; after the jury has found the criminal guilty, in the sense that the law requires; after the judge has pronounced the sentence that the law prescribes; after the spectators are satisfied that the criminal has been dealt with according to law, and that the law itself is a just and a necessary law — just, at least, as far as the objects and the nature of human laws admit of their being just, — does no farther question ever arise in the minds of all the actors in this scene — namely, how far the criminal, as a matter of just retribution, deserves to suffer? Is it not felt that, amid all the formalities of his trial, all the precautions by which the possibility of injustice has been fenced out, all the inquiries and examinations with which truth has been sought, all the machinery by which the effects of ignorance or partiality on the part of his judges have been excluded — is it not felt, I say, that amid all this, the real guilt of the criminal, as a moral agent, his *desert of suf-*

fering as a retributive measure, is a point that has been comparatively unattended to that not one circumstance has been mentioned in the course of trial, otherwise than incidentally, which would enable us to form a judgment in this particular? And if we can find that the criminal has been under the influence of powerful temptation — powerful whether in respect of the attractions of the tempting object, or the peculiar constitution of the criminal's mind, do we not consider all this as alleviations of his guilt? But, more than this, if we are satisfied that the temptation operated with increased effect from his destitution of moral principle — a destitution not the effect of a voluntary abandonment of virtuous habits, but of neglected, or rather perverted education, of constant familiarity with vice and bad company, exemption from discipline, and want of instruction (still allowing him to know he was committing a crime) should we not pity the criminal on account of these circumstances? And could we avoid believing that, when he came to be tried at last by the omniscient Judge, his sentence would pass on different grounds from those on which it had been founded by an earthly tribunal? And if we could suppose that the very *nature* of the criminal interposed not merely a difficulty, but an *absolute inability* and *incapacity* to avoid committing the crime; if his sense of moral obligation was *necessarily* overcome by the temptation; or, if he was positively averse to the influence of this obligation,

and under the insuperable dominion of evil inclinations and dispositions — can any man in his senses doubt that his desert of punishment would cease altogether ?

Depravity of dispositions and inclinations then, or a character indifferent or opposed to moral influence, is not guilt, nor does it carry along with it desert of punishment, unless when produced by the volition or volitions of the agent himself : and in whatever degree those qualities are part of a nature not formed by the will of the possessor of that nature, his guilt ceases.

I have only farther to observe, that it is not at all necessary to my present argument, to examine directly how far the theological system alluded to, consists either with scripture, or fact — meaning by *fact*, what is established by the consciousness of mankind in regard to moral freedom — but merely how far its truth is *theoretically possible*. Its supporters have sometimes rested its truth on metaphysical arguments, and it is on that ground I have endeavoured to meet them. I do not say, on the one hand, that man has the full capacity of doing good or avoiding evil. I do not say that suffering may not be connected with his necessary depravity ; but I say that it cannot be connected with it as punishment for guilt : neither do I say, on the other hand, that all men do not deserve punishment ; but I say that, if they do deserve it, the acts for which it is inflicted they must have

had the power to avoid. Either supposition may be true, or a part of each may be true ; but both at once, and in all their parts, cannot be true.

I might be called upon to account for the mere existence of a belief in what I thus represent as incredible ; but besides that this is explicable from the neglect of the distinction above alluded to, a distinction not often required in practice, it is well known that the incredibility of an opinion, on religious subjects, is so far from being a bar to its reception, that it is just a cause for its being adopted, as giving the believer ampler room for evidencing his *faith*. I suspect, however, the advocates of the doctrine in question have a lurking idea of man's incapacity to do good not being entirely absolute, but so nearly so as to leave his overcoming of it merely a matter of theoretical possibility — (which however will leave him but a sort of theoretical guilt.) But connecting with this the opinion that the smallest conceivable degree of guilt deserves infinity of punishment, they manage to escape the direct contradiction involved in saying that man is deserving of everlasting damnation for what he cannot avoid. How far this view of the matter consists with the *justice* of God, I shall not pretend to offer an opinion — *mercy* is obviously out of the question.

It is however exceedingly necessary to observe here, in order to obviate a very gross practical abuse that might be made of the views which I

have been maintaining, that although it is only acts of *will*, as distinguished from *dispositions*, that can deserve punishment, yet, in judging of human actions, whether our own or those of other beings, it is generally impossible for us — though it is entirely possible for the omniscient Judge — to say how much of immoral conduct may be due to overpowering strength of inclination, how much to want of energy in the will ; and that, as inclinations are always superable by will, no man has a right to excuse himself by saying, such was my inclination, my irresistible inclination ; — besides that, as the strength of inclinations themselves increase by wilful indulgence, whether as regards thought or action, every man must, in this sense, consider himself as responsible, if not for the existence, at least for the degree of his inclinations : — which, by the way, is the reason why disposition and choice have been so seldom distinguished. The proposition, then, that inclinations are not of good or evil desert, though strictly true in a relative and theoretical sense, is very far from being true in an absolute practical sense. Let it, moreover, be recollected that a morally bad disposition, even in that sense in which it is not of ill desert, is still, as being morally bad, the natural object of disapprobation and hatred.

It appears more than probable, too, that the same reasons which induce human governments to affix rewards and punishments to actions, ac-

according to their conformity or opposition to a certain *law*, and without regard to the *desert* of the agent, strictly so called, may influence, to a certain extent, the proceedings of the divine government. Indeed, were it otherwise, we should want a strong motive for seeking to improve the moral virtue of mankind, or to lead them to a knowledge of the divine law.

Reverting now, for a little, to the considerations lately stated in regard to the principles on which justice is administered in human tribunals, I cannot help remarking, that there is much thoughtlessness, much want of consideration and due pity, in the sentiments with which the *respectable* part of mankind — which generally means the lucky and comfortable part — behold the crimes and punishments of the more wretched of their brethren. How a person living in elegance and ease, holds up his hands at the grossness, the fraud, the violence, of those whose crimes are exposed and avenged by public justice! How just, how reasonable, how well deserved, does he think the punishment! How does he congratulate himself that his conduct and character are so different! — But have you considered also the difference of your circumstances? — Sated with enjoyment; with every desire gratified, every joy of life tasted, until perhaps the appetite has become palled; with the ministers of pleasure ever ready to attend on your call — how little can you esti-

mate the avidity with which an occasional, an unusual, an untried gratification is seized ! how little need you wonder at the gross, the inelegant excess, in which it is indulged ! — Unruffled by disappointment, undistracted by anxiety, unexposed to rudeness, contradiction, contumely, anger ; flattered into complacency by the respect and obsequiousness of inferiors, and the elegant mildness of equals ; never hearing a word uttered that is not, to say the least, either subdued by mercenary submission, or smoothed by artificial polish, — how little can you comprehend the temper of him who is soured by misfortune ; maddened by the prospect of hopeless, helpless poverty, and an entire exclusion from all the enjoyments, or even comforts of life ; exasperated by neglect and contempt, by the neglect and contempt of those who have been only more *fortunate* than himself ; hardened by continual contact with the discontent, the fierceness, the rapacity of those, who have been as unfortunate ! — Seated in abundance and security ; satisfied with the present, and at ease about the future ; feeling no embarrassment, no want ; so circumstanced, in short, as that dishonesty is either impracticable, or, if practicable, would be utter madness — would be disgrace and ruin without a motive, without a purpose — how little can you imagine what it is to be without a morsel of bread, without covering against the inclemency of the weather, without a home, without

a friend ! how little can you imagine what it is to ask for work, bare work, for scanty wages, and to be refused with coldness, perhaps driven away with suspicion ! How little need you be surprised that he whose very misery procures him the reputation of being a rogue, should yield to the temptation of really deserving such a character !

True, the man who is the most destitute *ought* to respect the persons and properties of others. In the midst of affluence, luxury, and superfluity, he *ought* to be content, though no pleasure falls to his share. If he cannot obtain any of the comforts, he *ought* to be satisfied with the necessities of life — if he cannot obtain even the necessities of life, without the most severe and unceasing labour, he *ought* to submit to such labour. If a man has been brought up amidst profligate companions, he *ought* to shake them off ; he ought to defy all their persuasions, all their ridicule. If, from his origin, or his education, he is suspected by those who could give him honest employment, he *ought* to wait with patience until he can establish a character.—What a fine thing is virtue, even in rags ! what glory and happiness in resignation, in fortitude, in perseverance against obstacles, in temperance and abstemiousness, in scrupulous integrity ! — All undoubtedly true. — All this the poor man *ought* to do : — but so the rich man *ought* to be temperate, chaste, benevolent, pious. Whatever fashionable eclat may attach to

certain vices, he *ought* to abstain from them ; whatever ridicule may be thrown upon his scruples, he *ought* to disregard it. If challenged to fight a duel, he *ought* to refuse, though he should thereby be banished from society. If he finds himself falling behind in the race of extravagance with his accustomed associates, he *ought* to retrench, and allow himself to sink into a lower grade. If he has run into debt, he *ought* to surrender every article of property till it is paid. He *ought* to give his political suffrage without regard to any consequences to himself or family. If holding patronage or appointments, he *ought* to look to the most worthy, though he should thereby disappoint and estrange relations, friends, associates. — *Are these things done?* — Yet, what a fine thing is virtue — when practised by the lower orders ! — I speak not of such failures in duty on the part of the higher classes, as if they were entitled to no allowance, admitted of no excuse. I only suggest that while those who enjoy ease and abundance behold the crimes and punishments of the poor, when they are disposed to congratulate themselves on their exemption from such crimes, they should consider whether they themselves perform those duties, resist those temptations, which belong to their peculiar situation in society ; whether they perform duties as easy, resist temptations as possible to be resisted, as those which belong to a lower situation of life ; whether, in

fine, they are, as moral agents, of better desert, — have made *greater sacrifices or exertions for duty*.

Surely it is no blame to a rich man that he has no temptation to intemperate excess, to fraud, to violence ; surely it does not save a poor man from blame, that he has such temptation ; but it furnishes a reason why the former should be less easily satisfied with his own conduct, why he should make more allowance for the errors and the crimes of those whose errors and crimes are, comparatively speaking, more their misfortune than their fault ; and, above all, why he should dedicate more of his time, his thoughts, his labour, his means, to the prevention of those causes which incite his inferiors to crime. Undoubtedly crimes must be punished, whether committed with, or without temptation — with or without excuse. If it is not morally just that the criminal should be punished, it may at least be necessary that he should be restrained or even extirpated. But one cannot help thinking that if a part of the time, the activity, the ingenuity, the expense, that are employed to detect and to punish the crime, when committed, were employed to remove the causes that lead to crime ; — if some part of the time which legislators spend in first, second, and third readings ; in committees, in speeches, in debates, motions and amendments, on criminal laws, were applied to discover and remedy the circumstances which form the criminal ; — if some of the expense

that is incurred in counsel's fees, witnesses' fees, officers' fees, in courts, judges, and juries, were applied to supply the want which prompted the theft or the robbery; nay, even if the purse, or the jewels, or the plate, or some portion of the value stolen, had been expended in voluntary beneficence;—if the same ingenuity that is used in examining and weighing evidence, in addresses, in replies, in charges, to ascertain the point, guilty or not guilty—were applied to investigate such other points, as how did the criminal become guilty? how was he ignorant? how had he become hardened? how came he to be in want, in destitution, in desperation? how far did his conduct admit of palliation or excuse?—if some part of the maintenance allowed to the criminal, had been allowed him before he became a criminal;—if the massy edifices constructed to secure him, had a little sooner been offered to shelter him;—if he had been provided with a voyage to another clime, and with employment on arriving there, *without*, instead of *with* the stain of crime:—surely some part of the vast degradation, and suffering, and guilt, that abound in this and every civilized country, would admit of being removed;—surely in the mode of our managing such matters, there is something like beginning at the wrong end!

But to return from this digression.—It is merely necessary farther to observe, in reference to the

subjects treated of in this chapter, that, as under equal degrees of perceived obligation, the merit or guilt of the agent is in proportion to the exertion used or omitted for the fulfilment of this obligation ; every thing that facilitates the exertion, every motive, inclination, disposition, or desire, drawing the same way, lessens the merit, or increases the guilt, and *vice versa*. A man is more guilty in injuring a relation or benefactor, not merely on account of the greater obligation he violates, but because natural affection, in these cases, would have assisted on the side of duty.

Some religious persons are fond of maintaining that the Deity can be pleased with no acts which are not performed directly and exclusively with a view to please him, and on account that he has commanded them ; and the same persons sometimes speak as if to this purpose, that the merit of any action consists entirely in its being performed to please God. A little discrimination will enable us to determine how far, and in what sense, this view is true, or the contrary. Now, in the first place, I hold it to be exceedingly clear, that the smaller and fewer the motives from which a moral agent fulfils a moral obligation, his virtue and merit are the greater : the greater, just from his being influenced by smaller or fewer motives : consequently a man who performs an action simply because he believes it to be right, and for no other reason, may have more virtue and merit, than one

who performs it partly for that reason, and partly because it is agreeable to the Deity: more especially as, in the latter case, he may be acting exclusively from a principle of selfish prudence, from a hope of reward, or fear of punishment: and as having less merit, his act must be, in this single respect, less approved by the Deity, as a moral being, and a judge of moral conduct. But then, in the next place, though a man may have more merit in acting where he has, in point of fact, but one motive, than where he has more than one, this fact, that he has but one motive, that is, that he has not been influenced by a regard to the will of the Deity, that he has disregarded this, which is a specific and independent obligation of itself, is a detraction from his moral virtue. And the Deity, though approving the agent for *acting without* the motive, may yet condemn him for *being without* it.

If I have rendered a man a favour, and if he afterwards does me a humane office, merely as a general moral obligation, and without any touch of gratitude to me, personally, his sensibility to moral obligation is more undoubtedly evinced than if he acted from that, and from the impulse of gratitude, jointly. But in so far as the impulse, and the special moral obligation of gratitude, were unfelt, there was an evident moral defect in his character or disposition. So a man who, performing certain acts, as being in themselves morally

right, yet fails to think of the moral relation between himself and the Deity, and the special obligation thence arising, must certainly be pronounced to be but of partial virtue. It is (and the illustration is but a weak one) as if a man were just, humane, and prudent, in private life ; but an entire despiser of the civil authority of the community in which he lived.

CHAPTER V.

OF ABSOLUTE RECTITUDE.

HOWEVER anxiously a virtuous agent may have inquired wherein his duty lay, however strictly and punctiliously he may have followed up his apprehension of it, his satisfaction with himself, the complacency with which others regard him, are each far from complete, if it comes to be found that he has, in fact, acted erroneously.

Nor is it merely where, acting with good intentions, we have formed a mistaken judgment of our duty, that we seem, both to ourselves and others, to have failed in the attainment of complete moral excellence; but even in those cases also where the event of our actions, from the mere influence of external causes, has been contrary to what was intended; and if, even while acting with a good intention and judgment, we should be prevented from producing the beneficial effect we contemplated, or if, acting with no bad intention or judgment, we should unawares produce mischief, in both cases our character of excellence seems to

suffer; and contrariwise where the event has turned out better than our mode of conduct naturally tended to.

The writer who has with most attention and success illustrated this particular feature in our moral sentiments, is Dr. Adam Smith. By styling it, however, an "irregularity" and assigning a *final cause* for its existence, this elegant and ingenious writer seems to consider it not as something resulting from the general system of our moral being, but as an appendage annexed to it by positive constitution. But though certainly not improbable that our Maker may, for obvious ends, have connected, in the frame of our minds, a feeling of hope and gratulation with the production of good, a feeling of regret and apprehension with the production of evil—however little aimed at, on our parts, in either case,—it does not appear to me absolutely necessary to resort to this supposition in order to explain the phenomena. The feelings in question may be accounted for in various ways.

First. By the mere effect of association, the cause, even though inanimate, of good, is agreeable; of evil, disagreeable. But so naturally and habitually do we associate the ideas of *purpose* and *design* with the acts of animated, especially of intelligent beings, that in no case can we, without effort and reflection, divest ourselves of a feeling of their responsibility. And in proportion as we are able, by reflection, to divest ourselves of this

feeling, we cease to have favourable or unfavourable sentiments towards them on account of the mere effects of their actions — which would seem to shew that such sentiments are not the result of any separate and independent principle.

Secondly. In the impossibility of looking into the hearts and minds of men, the good or evil *event* of their actions affords, in general, a *fair presumption* that there was more principle and stronger zeal in the one case, less principle and less care in the other, than if the good or evil had not actually been produced. And although a man, by looking into his own breast, may do justice to himself in such a case, he knows that others cannot, or will not take the pains to do it; and therefore he cannot quiet the apprehension of their condemnation, nor soothe the distress which that condemnation creates. Nay, he cannot — especially if of an uncultivated mind, and possessing but an imperfect system of theology—entirely relieve himself from apprehension of the Divine displeasure.

It will, in general, be found, that, wherever the sentiment of dissatisfaction felt in regard to an agent, on account of an unfortunate event unintentionally produced by him, rises to any degree of force or warmth, it is in those cases where a greater or less possibility can be conceived to exist of his having avoided it. There are few instances of mistaken judgment or undesigned production of evil but what we can suppose *might* have been

prevented by some greater degree of thought and caution. Even where there may appear a *moral* impossibility of avoiding the wrong, the physical possibility still remains present to our minds; and with that must remain the idea of some moral deficiency in the agent. If, in the greatest multiplicity and hurry of affairs, I omit some minute but eventually important point — however excusable, *in general*, some one omission or another may be owned to be, from the narrowness of the human capacity, yet still that particular omission, fixed upon it as our minds now are, is what we see no reason for having occurred; what, looked at by itself, was as possible to be avoided as any other. So, if, by the most harmless action, I happen to produce some unlooked for evil, the evil, after it has been produced, appears, not only to others but to myself, as what might not have been entirely unlooked for; what, in short, under a certain degree of care and consideration, might have been guarded against.

Lastly. A man's failure in fulfilling his own intentions, or his production of an unintended effect, even where it may indicate no moral culpability, is generally the evidence of at least some deficiency of power or ability — some incapacity, ignorance, or unskilfulness, which, if it does not excite moral disapprobation, gives birth to a feeling of contempt.

But whatever may be the sufficiency of these

considerations to account for the phenomena of which we are treating, one thing seems clear, that if the mere *event* of actions, as distinct from the intention, moves any feeling towards the agent, that feeling is not moral approbation or disapprobation strictly so called; nor can any thing but purposes or volitions be viewed as the proper objects of reward or punishment. Dr. Smith's theory makes no distinction between an inclination to do good or evil to a living being, and a perception of the moral fitness or obligation of doing so; yet no two things are more distinct: many qualities attaching our benevolence to an agent without the least reference to his moral desert: and we may feel a greater disposition to reward one who has done, than one who has intended to do good, just as we feel more inclination to render attentions to a handsome, than to a plain woman, and without any more idea of moral desert in the one case than in the other.

None of the examples produced by Dr. Smith are sufficient to shew that the fortune of an agent affects our ideas of his desert, properly so understood.

It may be true that we reckon ourselves under a greater moral obligation to repay one who has actually served us, than one who has ineffectually attempted to serve us. But the claims my benefactor has on me, are quite a different thing from his general desert of reward as a moral being.

The obligation of gratitude, as I have elsewhere endeavoured to shew, is that of an implied contract; and by no contract am I liable to perform the stipulations on my side, unless the other party perform his; however fully I may be satisfied of his having intended and attempted to fulfil them.* It may be quite just, so far as *he* is concerned, that a benefactor in intention should be repaid, as much as one in act. But it is not equally just that *I* should pay the one as the other, i. e. pay for what I have not received, as well as for what I have.

It may be thought, however, that the regard which civil laws shew to the event of an action, evince a feeling in the human mind, that the merit or guilt of the agent is affected by that event.

There can be no doubt that civil laws often punish one man, and let another escape, for performing the same action, with apparently the same mind, but with different consequences. Dr. Smith himself assigns some satisfactory reasons for this. To those I would add, — with respect to cases of rashness and heedlessness, where there is no positively bad intention, — that we can scarcely ever know, where harm has not actually been produced, the grounds which an agent may

* But as, in more explicit contracts, we sometimes come under an obligation to a party (as to a physician) in respect of his using his endeavour to serve us, without his incurring any responsibility for the success of it, so we may be bound in gratitude, and generally are to a certain extent, for the mere endeavour.

have had for believing that the action might be performed with safety: so that what might appear to us his good luck, might be really the effect of his circumspection: a circumspection he might yet be quite unable to establish in evidence.

I had lately occasion to suggest that a part of the uneasiness which a man feels when the event of an action has not been answerable to the goodness of his intentions, arises from the fear, that either the integrity or the strength of his principles may be suspected by the world.

It would seem that it is requisite for our full satisfaction, in the attainment of that excellence which virtue is felt to confer, that we be virtuous, not merely in reality, but in the apprehension of other beings. And a regard to character is undoubtedly felt to stand upon a very different footing from any mere taste or affection. We may be brought to do violence to our tastes, our feelings, our delicacy—nay, to submit to meanness and humiliation—in order to serve a friend or benefactor; but if we are asked to submit to the appearance of moral guilt in the eyes of the world—however in reality free from it—we feel the ground entirely changed, and that we may, without impropriety, give a refusal. A desire to be thought to do right, an aversion to be thought to do wrong, seems not so much an indication, a consequence, a concomitant of virtue, as really a part of it.

To maintain an appearance of virtue, may no

doubt be shewn to be an *obligation* or *duty*, in the strict sense of these terms. But a regard to character and appearance is not estimated merely as a regard to a particular duty, but as an essential feature of a virtuous character, taken in the general notion of it. At all events, there is perhaps nothing, short of actual wrong, which we think a man more justified in avoiding, than the name of guilt. And if a desire to promote fit effects, merely as such, be perhaps the purest form of virtue, the desire of the excellence which lies in doing so, and in being thought to do so, is removed from that essential purity of motive by so faint a shade of selfishness, as almost to require a microscopical consideration before it can be distinguished from it. A desire that *I myself* should be excellent in any way, is, in its own nature, a *selfish* desire.* But, in so far as this desire in behalf of self, is, that I should be esteemed virtuous, in so far as I place that excellence which I covet for self in virtue, and the reputation of it, so far I approve my regard to moral fitness in the abstract; since strong must be my regard for that which I place all my excellence, first, in promoting, and next, in being thought to promote.

The real excellence of a moral being can only

* *Gratitude* is a *selfish* affection, in respect of moral approbation in the general; for it is gratitude for what is done to *self* or some one identified with self. Hence gratitude is sometimes in proportion to selfishness.

consist in his doing what is obligatory; consequently his sacrificing an actual duty to the moral excellence of self is an impossible case. If the duty is sacrificed, his moral excellence is lost in the sacrifice. Not so with regard to his character of virtue. Occasions may occur in which his apparent excellence, as consisting in his reputation, must give way to his real excellence, and to his duty.

CHAPTER VI.

OF LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

IN the explanation given, in the preceding chapters, of the nature of moral *virtue* and *depravity*, as distinguished from *merit* and *guilt*, the liberty of the will — in opposition to that doctrine which maintains the necessity of human actions — has been taken for granted. I shall now, however, briefly state the principles on which I have come to a conclusion, quite satisfactory to my own mind, on this famous question.

The scheme of necessity is not *generally* represented by its supporters (for it would be unjust to charge them with consistency on this point) as one the truth of which is either readily perceived, or easily assented to. The doctrine of itself is not pretended to be so apparently true, or even credible, as the denial of it to be inconsistent with another allowed truth, namely, that “*every effect (or change) must have a cause.*” Whenever a man chooses or determines in one way rather than in another, there must be a *cause* for this

choice or determination — a cause sufficient to produce it — so that if the cause existed, the effect could not but follow, nor, the cause being the same, could any other effect follow. This cause, it is argued, cannot be the will itself; for this would suppose a volition to be the cause of itself — which is absurd. It must of course be something different from the will, and not depending upon it, and can be nothing else than what we call the *motive*. Every act of the will must proceed from, or be the effect of some motive, and must receive its whole energy and direction from the power and character of the motive. The will must, in every case, follow the prevalent motive, as any other effect must follow its cause.

Such, as every one knows, is the main argument for the doctrine of necessity.

The fallacy in the reasoning here employed appears to me to lie in this, that it confounds an *effect* (*as a change in the subject operated upon, from one specific state to another*) with the *specific mode of operation* belonging to a *cause*, (*as producing one change rather than another*), and assumes a volition or act of will to be of the former, instead of the latter description. An example may be required to make this intelligible.

If you taste an infusion of coffee, you have the sensation of bitterness. This sensation is an *effect*; and, as an effect, or change, from a previous state, must have a *cause*. And what is the cause?

undoubtedly the tasting of the coffee. When this is done, the sensation of bitterness is felt; when this is not done, the sensation is not felt. So far well. But to ask what is the cause of the bitter sensation, is only going half way into the matter. There still remains another inquiry, namely, — why does the coffee *produce* this effect, rather than *not* produce it? or why does it produce *this* effect rather than a *different* one? why does it produce a sensation of *bitterness*, rather than one of *sweetness*? Now this — not, what is the cause of the bitterness—is the question corresponding with that,—why does the will determine in one way rather than in another?

If the necessarians then are to argue, that, if, when the will chooses one course rather than another, there must be a cause for the preference, external to the will itself, — may we not as well argue, that, if coffee causes a bitter, rather than a sweet sensation, there must be a cause for this? Shew us the one cause, and we shall shew the other: if you cannot, neither need we.

You will say that a cause for this, though it cannot be shewn, may be conceived. Now however this may be, it will not be denied, at least, that we have no conception whatever of the nature of the connection between any cause and its effect. But granting what is required, we only shift the difficulty a step farther back. The same question recurs in regard to the cause next sup-

posed to be assigned ; and we must come at last to a cause that is so, on account of no other cause. A succession of causes and effects without beginning, is, I believe, admitted to be an absurdity. There must be some *first* cause or causes to put the train or trains in motion, and each of these causes must have its specific mode of operating,—which *specific mode* will still remain to be accounted for. The question then is not, whether every effect, that really is an *effect*, must not have a cause ; but how a *cause* that is not itself the effect of another cause (and some such there must be) comes to operate in *one* way rather than in *another*, or in any way at all. — You say the first cause operates by necessity of its nature. Can you prove this ? can you demonstrate the necessity ? is this anything more than an assumption ? or, when I say, on the other hand, that the first of a train of causes and effects may be the *will or choice of a living agent*, can you prove the absurdity of such a supposition ?—you will prove it by your maxim, that every effect must have a cause. But, let me repeat, we are not talking of *effects* at all. There must be a *cause* which is not itself an effect of any other cause. The question is — why or how is it a cause at all ? why is it the cause of any one effect rather than of another ?

You may say the volition cannot be the cause of itself. So, and with equal justice, may I say, the *cause*, whatever it is, cannot be the cause of

itself — cannot be the cause why it produces this effect rather than that. Does your *necessity* or *power* explain it better than my *will* or *volition* does? Is the former more conceivable than the latter, or more easily shewn? Is it better — is it half so well understood? or, arguing alternately from each supposition, — whether is it more difficult to believe that nothing whatever could have been different from what it is; that there could not have been another animal, stone, vegetable, leaf, or grain of dust, either in kind or number, than what is; that the impossibility of this is, in its own nature, and on the supposition of a sufficient degree of intelligence, as demonstrable as the equality of the opposite angles formed by the intersection of two lines — whether, I say, is this more credible, than that such particulars may have been determined by the *will* of some agent?

Whatever difficulty then exists in shewing that an agent may *will* in one way rather than in another, without a cause for so willing, exists alike in shewing how a cause can operate in one way rather than in another—be the cause of one effect rather than of another effect; and the argument of the necessarian is formed by the application of a philosophical axiom to a case which it does not comprehend; it speaks of that as an effect, which is not an effect, but a cause; a volition is not an effect at all: to suppose it to be so, is to beg the question. Since you must suppose a first cause,

operating in some specific mode rather than in another, why may not a *volition* be such?

It would perhaps be maintained, that a volition, as being what takes place at a particular point of time, and not at another point of time, must be considered a *change*, and therefore an effect which must have a cause.—But suppose we should maintain, on the contrary, that instead of being an *effect* produced by a cause, it is only the *specific time of the operation of a cause*, — is it more difficult to understand how active, intelligent power, operating as a cause, should exert itself at one time rather than at another, than how a material, un-intelligent cause should act at all rather than not act, or how it should act in one way rather than another? Explain the latter circumstance, and we shall explain the former.

In short, the giving of my assent, at all, to the maxim on which the necessarian scheme is founded, namely, that every effect must have a cause, implies that I form a notion of *cause*. Now the notion of cause must be that of something which operates, rather than does not operate; operates at one time, rather than at another; operates in one way, rather than another: and the question regarding the manner in which the will acts without motives, is really a question regarding the *mode of operation belonging to a cause*. This question presses *at least* as much upon the scheme of necessity, as upon the scheme of free will: it is, I

say, at least, as easy to explain how the will operates at one time, or in one way, rather than in another, as it is to explain how any other cause operates in one way rather than in another. But must I confine myself to saying that it is as easy? that the one thing is as comprehensible as the other? — Whence, I should ask, is the almost universal preference given by mankind to schemes of theism over those of atheism, but that we can much more easily comprehend how the present determinate frame of things was produced, at a determinate point of time, by the will of a free agent, than by the operation of a blind necessity.*

But apart from the general position, that every effect must have a cause, the necessarians argue, in regard to the nature of the specific case, the absurdity of supposing the will to act independently of motives. What can be more absurd, it is asked, than to suppose that a man who has a motive to act in one way, will act in another way in which he has no motive to act! or to suppose that a man who has a strong motive to act in one way, a weak motive to act in another, will follow the weak, instead of the strong motive!

This is a plausible mode of arguing, and the

* It is difficult to see, upon the necessarian scheme, why we should suppose the existence of such a faculty as *will* at all. Why not the motive at once cause the action? What use in interposing the will? How did we ever suppose there was such a thing?

necessarians have made the most of it. A great part of Dr. Priestley's book consists of nothing else.

In reply, I shall not stop to suggest the numberless cases in which a man acts without any motive, that is, to say the least, assignable, either by himself or others—as in choosing the time, or manner, or degree, of doing many things, that may be done at one time, or in one way, as well as another:—because it may be said that the motive, though not assignable, may yet exist. I shall not advert to the circumstance that a man may act, not only without a motive, but contrary to a motive, merely in order to prove his free agency:—because it may be pretended that the desire to prove his free agency is, in such case, a motive: nor shall I, in regard to this point, remark upon the absurdity of supposing that an agent, whose will (as we are required to believe, and as he must be taken to believe) must passively follow the prevailing motive, may yet *conceive an inclination*, so strong, to resist that motive, simply for the sake of resisting it, as shall of itself, after all, prove the prevailing motive: * — because, in re-

* The freedom of the will is supposed in every case in which we use persuasion, entreaty, or command, (as distinct from argument.) How would the necessarians explain the use of these? They would say, I imagine, that our persuasions, entreaties, or commands, are offered as *motives* to determine the will of the person we address. But these cannot possibly operate as mo-

gard to so abstruse a point, assertions may be made on either side, which it may be impossible to rebut. I shall freely admit — for the sake of argument at least — that the will never acts without a motive. The doctrine of free agency does not necessarily require us to suppose that the will, in any case, acts without motive ; but only that, in following one motive rather than another, it is not, in every case, drawn or impelled by a power in the motive, but chooses to act from that motive in preference to the other, by a power of its own : a power exerting itself independently of the strength of either motive. I say that the will is not, *in every case*, impelled or drawn by a power in the motive ; because, as the advocates of free agency need not deny that the will always acts from regard to a motive, so neither need they deny that motives exercise an influence on the will : an influence greater or less in every case ; an influence in some cases irresistible, and, to all intents and purposes, excluding free agency.† It is suffi-

tives otherwise than as the person *feels* his free agency. Their being motives, or their being offered as motives, *supposes* a conviction, on both sides, that the party sought to be influenced has power to follow or resist the influence : all the forms of persuasion, intreaty, or command, suppose this : they are *addressed to a man's sense of free agency*.

† To say that the will may, in *some cases*, be *influenced*, or even *irresistibly determined* by motives, no more contradicts the position that the will may, in other instances, *choose*, irrespectively of the strength of motives, than it contradicts the

cient for the argument on the side of free will if *one case* can be shewn to exist in which the will is not determined by the strength of the motive, but by its own power of choice. The argument of the necessarian requires him to maintain the *impossibility of this in any case*.

To all this it is to be added, that, as the name of the *strongest motive* may be given to that which the will *in fact* chooses to follow, (supposing the will to have such a power,) it must always be true, in one sense, even on the theory of free agency, that the will follows the strongest motive; and to say the contrary must just be the same sort of absurdity, as to say, that a triangle may have four sides.

In combating then the absurdity, imputed to their opponents, of supposing the will to act without motives, or to follow a weak rather than a strong motive, the necessarians combat a phantom of their own raising; and a victory over this phantom (so far as they obtain a victory) they have shewn themselves apt to mistake for a victory

position that *a cause operates*, to say that such cause may have its operation modified or counteracted by other causes. Because a man cannot swim so easily across a current, as across a pool; because he may at one time let himself be borne with the current, when he might stem it; because, at another, he is carried with the current in spite of all his exertions, — does this prove that he has no strength or power at all over his own motions?

over the real power with which they have to contend.

That the will acts from a regard to motives, nay, that it always follows the strongest motive, is, so far as this is true, and in that sense in which it is true, equally true, and equally intelligible, upon the scheme of free will, as upon that of necessity; and the denial of it not less absurd.

A man who chooses between *duty* and *inclination*, must act, even upon the theory of free will, from a *motive*. If he prefers his duty to inclination, he acts from a motive: if he prefers his inclination to his duty, he acts from a motive; and still upon the supposition that his choice is not an *effect* but the specific operation of a cause. Upon the same supposition, if he chooses to follow his duty, duty may be said to be the strongest motive with him; if to follow inclination, inclination may be said to be the strongest motive. All this language is quite consistent with the doctrine of free will.

To the argument for necessity founded on the supposed incompatibility of man's free agency with the prescience of the Deity, it has been replied,

I. That this incompatibility has never been proved: on the contrary, it has been argued that there is no objection against the prescience of future events, which would not apply to the memory of past events. This argument has never been re-

futed ; and this much at least is certain, that our recollection of past events is not effected by calculating backwards from effects to causes, in the way in which the prescience of the Deity is conceived to depend on a calculation forwards from causes to effects ; and if his prescience is not founded on such a calculation, it may exist otherwise than on the supposition of the necessity of human actions.

II. If these two things should be incompatible, we have as good proof of the freedom of the will, as of the prescience of the Deity ; so that the argument is a recoiling one. People who wish well to religion will be cautious how they deduce from its doctrines things impossible to be believed. There is an action and reaction in logic as well as in physics.

III. The degree in which the actions of men are allowed to be necessary, or dependent on motives, may account for the prescience of the Deity, — so far as this prescience has ever been known as a fact ; — (I allude to scriptural prophecies.) If we consider the extent to which a man powerful in human means, may influence, without physical force, the actions of his fellow men, and the accuracy with which a certain degree of sagacity and experience may foresee such actions ; and if we take into account the immeasurable superiority possessed by the Deity in all that is necessary to furnish such foresight, — a degree of prescience,

which, in regard to our ideas, may well be called absolute and infinite, may be easily accounted for, without supposing it to extend with perfect certainty to every action whatsoever. And supposing we were to admit that the Deity, in all those cases where we know that he has foreseen, or where he wished to regulate the actions of men, did irresistibly influence their will, — is there no medium between supposing such a power as free will to be occasionally overcome, and supposing it not to exist at all ?

It has been properly observed, that to suppose the Deity cannot create a free agent, is as great derogation from one of his attributes, as the impossibility of foreseeing all the actions of such an agent, is from another of them.

Such is the manner in which I have satisfied myself that the arguments in favour of the necessarian scheme may be obviated. I come now to state the positive objections to it.

It has already appeared that the doctrine of necessity has been adopted by its supporters, not so much on account of any apparent truth which it possesses of itself, as with a view to save a philosophical maxim, namely, that every effect must have a cause. Now if it can be shewn, as has been attempted, that the doctrine of free will involves no greater difficulties than those which must attend our recognition of this maxim itself,

we virtually destroy the foundation on which the doctrine stands ; or at least, by obviating any proof that can be drawn in its favour *à priori*, we narrow the dispute to a mere question of fact. Now if it can be shewn that, in point of fact, the will does not follow the stronger motive, in any other sense than what would make this proposition an identical one, the argument against the doctrine becomes complete.

Take a single case by way of illustration. It is well known that a man's *duty* to himself, or regard to his greatest good on the whole, is often so much opposed to his present inclination, that the latter can only be overcome by *difficult exertion*.—The mere fact that such *exertion* ever occurs, seems to me sufficient to settle the whole question. How exertion — exertion to control self — to deny self — (which, be it observed, is an entirely different case from that where *one inclination overcomes another*) how, I say, *exertion* can take place without free will, without the certain consciousness of free will, is what I can no more comprehend than how figure could exist without extension, or matter without space.—But this only by the way :—what I am at present to ask is this,—is it duty or inclination that is here the *stronger* motive ? If it is duty, — I desire to know how that can possibly be the stronger motive, which it requires exertion to make the will follow. If it is inclination, — I then desire to know how exertion can spring from

a weaker motive against a stronger. The occasion for the exertion requires to be explained on the one supposition — the possibility of it, on the other.* But how either of these motives can be called the *strongest* motive, in a more proper sense than the other, the necessarians have never explained. A man's *duty* is undoubtedly the strongest of all motives: stronger than any opposing inclination possibly can be, in this sense, that it is what he *ought* to prefer to every other motive.—Does a man then always prefer his duty to every other motive? A man's present inclination must, in another sense, be the strongest motive of any, in the very notion that we must form of a present inclination.—Does a man then always prefer his inclination to his duty? Is it not as absurd to talk of the comparative strength of motives in this case, as of the comparative strength of brandy and of the tone of a bell? or is there any thing else you can mean by the stronger motive, but the motive which, in point of fact, the agent chooses to follow?† — A man takes into his stomach what

* To use the necessarian's favourite illustration of a *balance*, — does ever the smaller weight make a struggle to raise the greater? or has the greater ever occasion to bestir itself in this way, in order to raise the smaller?

† I have chosen, for illustration, the case where a duty to *self* is opposed to inclination, in order to shew, that even where the opposing motives have so much in common as both to consist in a view of good to self, they yet possess no common

he likes best : but he sometimes takes nauseous medicines — does he like these medicines best ? yes : and how ? because if he did not, he would not take them ! — such is the argument for necessity.

If the necessarians choose to deny that their proposition is merely an identical one ; if they maintain that the actually prevailing motive possesses superior strength, in another sense, than merely that it is the prevailing one, — they are to shew wherein such strength consists. Until they do this, the argument from *fact* must be held to stand entirely against them. I am not indeed aware that they pretend to such an argument, as separate from that *a priori*. That the motive which the will follows in any particular case, is the strongest motive, is certainly not shewn by them as a matter of *fact*, but only as a matter of *inference* from their general position. That position, however, I have before attempted to shew to be in itself untenable. The want of the argument *a priori* then threw us upon the argument of fact : the want of the argument of fact now throws us back on the argument *a priori*.

On the whole, the judgment that is to be formed with regard to the proposition, that the will must always follow the strongest motive, is not so promeasure by which we can compare their respective strength as motives ; but that each may, with perfect propriety, be termed the *strongest* motive by which a man can be affected.

perly that it is erroneous, or untrue, (when not purely an identical proposition,) as that, in its application, it must frequently want a meaning; since there are some cases of opposing motives whose respective strength is not measurable by any common standard; where it is as impossible to compare the one with the other, as to compare the size of one body with the weight of another. And the cause, I may observe, of the more than ordinary confidence in their own opinions, manifested by each of the two parties in this dispute, is simply that the proposition which asserts that the will is always led by the strongest motive, is, in one sense, so true, as to be nothing more than an identical proposition; in another sense, so absurd, or rather so much more than absurd, as to be altogether an unmeaning one.

In the last place, I can find no room, in the system of necessity, for our notions of merit and guilt, or *desert of reward and punishment*.

I allow the doctrine of necessity to be consistent with the notion of moral virtue or depravity; I admit that occasion might subsist, even according to that system, for rewards and punishments, to counterbalance opposite motives, in the same way as we discipline animals: but, I repeat, all this leaves no room for the specific notions of *merit* and *guilt*. Mankind have notions of merit and guilt, of desert, of reward and punishment, of retributive justice; in short, — essentially distinct

from any consideration of the use of reward or punishment in the way of encouragement, prevention, or example. It is very convenient for the necessarian to attach notions of his own to these terms, and then say his system explains them. It is very easy to say that guilt is a liability to be affected by bad motives, desert of punishment a capacity of having these bad motives counterbalanced by punishment, or fear of punishment. This does not fulfil the ideas of guilt and punishment, as those ideas exist in the natural apprehensions and feelings of mankind; and the necessarian has no right to mould them to his system.

It has not been my purpose to go at length into the famous controversy about liberty and necessity; but I should not have thought myself warranted in simply taking for granted, without at least assigning some reasons, a point so necessary to the validity of the doctrines I have offered, and one which is generally conceived to be so extremely doubtful and incapable of receiving solution.

I shall here present, in one view, an abstract of the reasoning above given.

The first argument for necessity, is the *direct* one, that every effect or change must have a cause. — In answer — denied that a volition is an *effect or change*, otherwise than as the specific time and mode of operation belonging to a cause, is an effect or change: —or— which comes to the same purpose — if this is asserted to be really an effect

or change, the truth of the maxim itself, so far as relates to such an effect or change, is denied.

The second argument is an argument *ad absurdum*.—If the will is not determined by motives, it may act without a motive, or against one; or from a weak, against a strong motive.—Answer — In one sense, the absurdity of the consequence denied; in another, the consequence itself denied.

The third argument is also an argument *ad absurdum* — If the will is free, the Deity cannot foresee every human action. — Answer — Denied that the conclusion is a necessary one; denied that it is absurd, if it were: or only partly (if partly) admitted to be a necessary conclusion, but so far denied to be absurd—only partly (if partly) admitted to be absurd, but so far not a necessary conclusion.

The arguments against necessity are,

First, The argument of fact, as derived from consciousness and observation. In *whatever* the strength of a motive is defined to consist,—not true that the will follows the strongest motive.

Second, Argument *ad absurdum*. If the will is not free, there could be no desert of reward and punishment; but there is desert of reward and punishment; therefore the will is free.

There are many other arguments on each side. I have only stated what appeared to myself the most material.

P A R T IV.

APPLICATION OF THE PRECEDING DOCTRINES TO THE SOLUTION OF THE CONTROVERSY REGARD- ING THE RELATION OF *UTILITY* TO VIRTUE.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL RECAPITULATION AND ANALYSIS.

IN the consideration of the subjects that compose a theory of morals, there is generally as much difficulty in keeping in view what is the question, as in determining what is the answer. Numerous treatises have been written, in which, under such vague designs as those of “explaining virtue” — “explaining our moral nature” — “determining why some actions are preferred to others” — and the like — the authors have proceeded without the least attempt to separate the different inquiries involved in such designs; and

accordingly the views they furnish bear reference sometimes to one, sometimes to another, sometimes to a mixture of several or all together.

The various difficulties which have all along perplexed the theory of morals, have mainly arisen from two sources. And, in the first place, from this, that philosophers have failed to distinguish sufficiently between the two great branches of inquiry to be pursued — namely, between that, on the one hand, which seeks to discover by what *constitution of mind* it is, that we perceive moral distinctions, and that, on the other, which would ascertain, *wherein distinctions, so perceived, consist*. Thus there have been several writers (as Dr. Brown and Dr. Smith) who, content with merely establishing the existence of a principle in human nature, by which certain actions are approved, others condemned, make the *goodness* of an action just to *consist* in its pleasing the moral faculty, its badness, in like manner, in displeasing it. Thus fortifying themselves, so to speak, within the entrenchment of a truism, by which they are removed from the possibility of attack, they have found full leisure to observe all the weak points of those who have taken up another division of the subject. The question then, let it be observed, between those philosophers, and others, such as Paley, Clark, and Hume, who have really entered into the second of the inquiries above stated, is not, which of the two sides are

right, — for the former cannot be wrong, having virtually evaded the point at issue — but, whether the latter are right or not?

Both of these questions, farther, have most unluckily been confounded with another, namely, *why do we perform* certain actions, and avoid the performance of others? This has sometimes been considered the same as asking, “what is that, in *our nature*, which makes *us view* one action as good, another as bad?” — sometimes as asking, “what is that in the *nature of one action*, that makes *it to be viewed* as good; in *another*, that makes it to be viewed as bad?” — whereas it is, or may be, distinct from both; and may mean merely “what is the immediate *motive* which incites us *to perform* one action *avoid* another?” — whether this motive be a sense of duty, or any other motive. The effect of this oversight has been, to confound moral goodness, strictly so called, (and which consists in a regard to moral obligation,) with certain instinctive impulses or affections, such as pity, sympathy, parental affection, which often lead to the same ends as a sense of obligation, but not always. The peculiar emotion which the view of these affections excites in the mind of the beholder, has, in like manner, been confounded with the emotion of moral approbation, or the sentiment excited by the view of moral excellence, in its strict meaning.

In the next place, and in addition to the manner

in which the two great questions formerly described have been mixed up, both with one another, and with a third question, — it has been overlooked that each of the two contains within itself a variety of subordinate questions; that as, on the one hand, the act or state denominated *approbation*, comprehends or stands for several operations, both of an *intellectual or judging*, and of a *feeling or emotive* kind, so, on the other, what is termed the *goodness* of an action, includes, or may be made to signify, a variety of qualities, some of which may exist without the other, and several of which may co-exist in an action in quite different degrees.

As a just discrimination of the several ways or senses in which an action may be *good*, is not only absolutely necessary for attaining a solution of the general question, “For *what quality in actions* are some of these approved, others disapproved,” but indirectly tends, through that solution, to clear away certain of the difficulties that attend the other great question, “How *do we approve or disapprove* certain qualities in actions,” — this, namely, the different ways in which an action may be good, will now be made the subject of some farther illustration.

When we come to ask, then, why an action is a *good* action, we must consider whether, in calling it good, we have regard principally to the nature of the *effect* it produces; to the amount of *reason why* any agent rather than another, or any agent

at all, should perform it ; to the *character or disposition* which leads any agent to the performance of it ; or to the *energy of the volition* by which such agent *chooses* to perform it, independently of present disposition : — in other words, whether its character be more that of a fit end, a special duty, a virtue, or a merit.

Thus, it is evident, that, when we speak of feeding or clothing the indigent, relieving the sick, and the like, as *good* actions, they are actions good in a different manner or sense from that in which we call the performance of promises, the rendering of various offices to parents, children, relatives, benefactors, neighbours, good. These, in like manner, are good in a different sense from what resignation, piety, love of virtuous beings, candour, sincerity, are good. These, lastly, are good in a different sense from what resistance to temptation, struggling with difficulties, are good. Some actions are good chiefly in one of these respects, some chiefly in another ; seldom, however, so as to want that character in some or all of the remaining modes.

For example : gratitude, when spoken of as something morally good, is taken, for the most part, in the sense of a *virtue*, i. e. as something in the character of an agent, for which we love and admire, or, for the want of which, we should hate and despise him : or the act of requiting a benefactor is spoken of as a *special duty*, as being highly imperious, what cannot be dispensed with,

what a man is bound to perform above many other kinds of good action. Accordingly, gratitude is not generally characterized in the manner of a good end, as being beneficial or useful ; or, in the manner of a merit, as deserving of praise or reward ; but as something amiable, an object of affection — its contrary, ingratitude, shameful, hateful, dishonourable, despicable. The performance of a grateful action must always have an effect that is good and beneficial, and may also be meritorious, as the agent may have overcome opposing inclinations or external obstacles in the performance of it ; yet the last two particulars are less essential to its character.

Resignation to distress is, in one point of view, a fit or beneficial effect : it is a state of tranquillity, composure, and satisfaction, the contrary of impatience or despair, or of resentment against injustice or cruelty. As a fit effect, the production of such a state of mind must be a duty. The character or disposition of mind, however, considered as the cause by which the fit effect is produced, is a *virtue* ; the exertion it costs the agent is a *merit* ; and it is principally in the last two points of view, that resignation is denominated morally good : being less frequently spoken of as beneficial, or as imperious, than as excellent, admirable, worthy of commendation and reward.

In acts of beneficence and charity, the con-

sideration of the effect generally predominates : they are styled *beneficial*, *useful*, — yet also virtuous, amiable, — or, it may be from peculiar circumstances, — meritorious, deserving of praise or reward.

The performance of good offices to parents, children, relatives, &c. is not often represented either as beneficial or amiable, or as calling for praise or reward ; but as imperious, what there is a strong call to perform, what must have a preference over most other duties, what can less easily be excused, and the like — in other words, as *specially obligatory*, or matter of duty.

In so far as, in any case, the object of our approbation is a quality or character in an agent, it is always necessary to distinguish how far this quality or character is the principle of virtue, properly so called, or some amiable natural disposition, operating independently of the sense of moral obligation. Both of these are objects of love and estimation, but in different ways ; and it is only the affection excited by the first that is properly termed moral approbation.

The distinction between virtue and natural dispositions is most necessary to be attended to in estimating the character of actions in which those natural dispositions are subjected to control ; because the sentiment excited by the view of such actions has here a complex object, namely, the affection or emotion that is controlled, the power

by which, and the principle from which, it is controlled.

The exercise of self-command, always excites admiration. It may happen to be exercised in the repression of an odious or despicable passion ; but yet from an unworthy motive. In such a case we think less of the agent both for having such a passion to control, and on account of the motive from which it is controlled : but still his self-command draws its tribute of admiration.

But when an agent controls an affection in itself amiable, and this from a motive of duty, he appears in the brightest and most striking light in which an imperfect being can possibly be placed. We admire him at once for the affection itself, for the virtue which moves the effort to control that affection, and for the power which the effort displays.*

“ The force of the tender passions,” says Mr. Hume, in his elaborate character of Queen Elizabeth, “ was great over her ; but the force of her

* And although we should regard the agent as being in a higher degree *virtuous*, if the strength of the virtuous principle had, at once, and without effort, overcome the inclination ; and although we should also have admired him more, but in another way, if his natural powers of self-command had lessened the necessity of the effort, — yet the circumstances which gave occasion for the effort, — namely, the weakness of the moral principle, and the want of natural self-command — are precisely what increase the merit, strictly so called, or the agent’s desert of reward.

mind was still superior; and the victory which the combat visibly cost her, serves only to display the strength of her resolution, and the loftiness of her ambitious sentiments."—How touching would this description become, could we view Elizabeth's sacrifice of the affections of her heart as having been made to a principle of duty, instead of to a cold, narrow, and selfish ambition. As it is, who does not admire the effort of resolution displayed by this illustrious female, and sympathize with the feelings it was employed to overcome.

We sometimes hear even amiable affections censured as being excessive. Such censure however mistakes its just object. Amiable affections can never be too strong. It is not in any case the excess of the affection that displeases, but the relative weakness of the self-commanding power. The more passionately and fondly a man loves his wife, his mistress, his children, he appears for that cause the more amiable. But his power over these affections is the object of a sentiment entirely different; and we shall admire or despise him for the possession or want of this power,—the feelings excited by the view of his affections remaining the same. When we reckon him a weak man, whether as an uxorious husband, a puling lover, or an overfond parent, we despise, not the excess of his affections, but the deficiency of his power of self-control.

An inattention to the difference between an

affection itself, and the power of controlling that affection, leads to a frequent error in our practical judgments. We often give a man credit for the strength of his affections, when, in reality, it is only his power of self-command that is deficient; we often call that self-command, which is want of feeling. In like manner, we sometimes suppose a man to be devoid of affections, merely because he can master them; at other times, we blame his want of self-control, though his weakness, in this respect, may not be absolute, but only relative to the strength of his affections. Indeed the practical judgments of mankind are generally formed upon a sort of aggregate view of all the particulars which the complex notion of a moral action includes.—Its effects; the peculiar obligation of it; the moral virtue, the merit, the natural dispositions (including the self-command) of the agent, — are seldom separated; and the *goodness* of the whole action is estimated by a sort of addition, or, it may be, balancing, of all these particulars together.

CHAPTER II.

OF OBJECTIONS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY, DEPENDENT ON A CIRCUMSCRIBED USE OF THE TERM.

THE justice of the observations that have been offered in the preceding chapter, in regard to the necessity of distinguishing the separate inquiries that occur in a theory of morals, and, in particular, of discriminating the various ways in which we may be said to prefer some actions to others,—following some, avoiding others, — determining some to be good, others bad, — the justice, I say, of these observations, and the assistance to be derived from them in solving some of the principal difficulties that have perplexed the philosophy of morals, will best be discovered, if we view them in their bearing upon any of the more considerable controversies to which this subject has given birth. Of these, that which regards the relation of *utility* to moral right, I conceive to be the most deserving of notice. It is, at all events, that which, from the peculiar colour of some of my own opinions, I have most occasion to review; and it

will be found to afford a full exemplification of all the different species of entanglement with which the theory of morals has been so much beset.

Of those theories which have treated, at all, of the *second* principal branch of inquiry formerly described, or that which would ascertain the common quality of those actions which are reckoned *good* or the contrary, (supposing them to have some other common quality than merely that they are approved or disapproved,) some, like those of Clark and Woolaston, may, I think, be characterized as nugatory and trifling: — for, certainly, to tell us that the moral goodness of an action consists in acting according to the fitness — according to the truth of things, — unless they specify *wherein the fitness or the truth of things consists*, — seems much the same as it would be to say, that the goodness of an action consists in doing what is right. Those theories which resolve the moral goodness of actions into *utility* — let such theories be true or false (and they will be found to be partly the one, partly the other,) — are those alone which even give the promise of an efficient explanation on this subject. That the utility of actions bears some relation to their moral propriety, no one has ever been able to deny: yet there seems to have existed in some quarters a most extraordinary disinclination to admit of a recourse to this principle, or even to suffer the bare mention of it otherwise than in the way of an accessory topic.

Were I to be asked, in general terms, whether the doctrine founded on the principle of utility is *true*, — whether the *moral goodness* of actions consists in their *utility*, — I should, without much hesitation, answer in the negative; and this if it were for a single reason only—namely, that utility, in one very common use of the term, is just employed to express something the *opposite of moral right* — so that to say, in this way, that the doctrine of utility is not true, would be merely an identical proposition.

In stating, in a former part of this work, what appears to me to be the just and natural theory of moral obligation, I have purposely avoided the use of the term *utility* altogether, on account of the prejudice to which I conceive it subject; but I cannot and would not deny, at the same time, that the doctrines there advanced, are, in a great measure, those which have been advocated by one of the most eminent supporters of the principle of utility — I need not say that I allude to *Paley*. I am under the necessity then of inquiring into the validity of the objections which have been urged against the system of that writer, since most of them will press, with more or less force, against the statement which I myself have offered. My disinclination, on the other hand, to be classed as an indiscriminate and general supporter of a doctrine, which, as many persons understand its nature, is no less false than pernicious, prompts me

to be full and explicit in pointing out what are those of its forms and features in which I dissent from it. This must be my apology for entering into the subject at some length ; and it will be my object in general to shew, either that the arguments that have been brought against systems founded on the principle of utility are of themselves invalid ; or, where just, are provided against in the system I have attempted to exhibit.

I must observe however (having alluded to the system of *Paley*) that his account of what he calls the “ subject of virtue,” — namely, the “ doing good to mankind ” — is not at all involved or mixed up with his peculiar notion of the nature of moral *obligation* — (which he resolves *solely* into an obedience to the will of the Deity, for the sake of our own happiness) — a notion which, utterly absurd as it is, is yet not more so, at least, than the opinion which would make certain actions obligatory, merely for the gratification of a certain implanted moral *sense* or *taste*. Those who allow that the common quality of actions approved by us is their being *useful*, may assign different reasons *why we ought* to perform such actions.—Some may reckon the will of God a sufficient reason ; some, as *Paley* seems to do, may think a farther reason necessary why we should obey the will of God—namely, in order to obtain reward and avoid punishment in a future world. Some may say that the performance of such actions is connected,

in our constitutions, with an agreeable feeling ; and others, that reason must perceive in the very nature of such actions an obligation to perform them. Any agreement then, more or less, with Paley's account of the *subject* of virtue, is quite consistent with the entire rejection of his theory of *obligation*.

The arguments that have been brought forward in opposition to the doctrine which makes *utility* the foundation of the moral *goodness* of actions, are divisible into two great branches : —

I. Those which have their origin in the want of a distinct understanding as to the *meaning and application* of the term *utility*.

II. Those which, without reference to any particular manner of using the term *utility*, oppose the doctrine *generally*, and in its essential features.

The first class of objections now described, involves a question, first, As to what is meant by the utility of an action, secondly, As to whom the action is supposed to be of utility — of utility *how?* of utility *to whom?*

In regard to the first question then, I would observe,

I. That the word *utility*, in its ordinary and established usage, is, I believe, invariably applied to means only, never to ends ; or, if ever it is applied to an end, it is only where that end is itself viewed as a means to some ulterior end. Useful, — of utility — always implies useful *for some pur-*

pose; and hence a thing may be of *utility* in respect of promoting an *end*, though that end is not of *utility* itself. Many things are useful for the support of life; yet it is not common to say that life is useful, but that it is valuable or desirable. A man's life is often *useful* to his *family*, sometimes it is felt to be of *no use* to *himself* (i. e. it is not a *means* or occasion of his being in a condition of enjoyment such as he could feel satisfied with.) In both these instances, life is conceived as useful for ulterior purposes. Many things are useful for the attainment of happiness; but happiness itself would not be denominated useful. Air and exercise are of utility for preserving health. Health itself, as a state of ease and undepressed spirits, is *valuable* — but it would be said to be of *utility* only for the *purpose* of enabling a man to enjoy the pleasures and transact the affairs of life. Is pleasure of utility? No; it answers no end; it is itself an ultimate end.

Nor do those objects that are productive of a *direct* pleasure (though they may be said to be the *means* of obtaining that pleasure) come under that description of *means*, to which the character of utility is applicable. Such objects, especially if they produce but a slight degree of pleasure, are properly designated as *agreeable*. Flowers, perfumes, ornaments, are styled *agreeable* in opposition to useful: they serve no purpose beyond the immediate pleasure they create, while that pleasure itself is but of insignificant value.

But secondly, I suspect it is not even to *means in general*, — as distinct from *ends*, or from objects *directly agreeable*, — but only to means in the strictest sense of the term, that is, to passive instruments employed by an agent, that a delicate observance of verbal propriety will warrant the application of the term *utility*. A machine is a useful machine, — a man is a useful man ; of the former we should praise the *utility* — of the latter, not the *utility*, but the *usefulness*. We speak of the utility of a carriage — not so properly of the utility of a horse ; a man's friends are *of use* to him — we do not often say they are *of utility*. But we speak of a *measure* of utility ; because a measure is nothing active, but a means employed by an active being, for the production of some desired end.

III. Utility is a term involving that meaning of the word *use*, in which it imports *election* or *choice*, or the making *use* of one thing out of several. That is useful, or of utility, which may advantageously be used or employed for any purpose — not that which absolutely must be used. We do not say that food is of utility to a starving man ; it is absolutely necessary or indispensable. A plank on which a shipwrecked mariner bears himself to the shore, is not merely useful or of utility to him ; it is what his preservation entirely depends upon — it is his sole resource.

IV. The class of words to which *utility* and *use-*

ful belong, relate, in their import, not merely to the efficacy of a means, but to the frequency of its employment. That *is in use* which is commonly or generally done: *usage* is ordinary practice. That a thing is of utility, then, generally implies that it serves some purpose of frequent or general use. A bed or a table is of utility, — a harp or an organ is not of utility. Every one has daily occasion to sleep and eat — only a few to perform music, and that only for a purpose of recreation. Yet again, as relative to the purpose served by a harp or an organ, the strings of the one, the keys of the other, are of *utility*. The carved and gilded frame of a harp or an organ is of no utility.

Lastly, as there may of course be different degrees of utility (in any sense of the term)—in this way, as in the case of every quality that admits of degree, one thing may be said to be of utility, another not of utility, just as one man is called rich, another not rich, in respect that one is richer than the other. And thus the attribute of utility comes to be more specially confined to those things which possess a medium or considerable degree of utility. And a thing may, in popular language, be of more or less utility, either as it is more or less the means of an end, or the means of an end more or less valuable.

On the whole, that is of utility which is useful for some *farther purpose*, not merely agreeable or even supremely valuable *in itself*; useful, as being

used by an agent, passively, and as *an instrument*, not as what itself acts as an auxiliary or subordinate agent ; useful, as what we may *use*, but are not altogether dependent upon ; useful, as being in general, ordinary *use* or *usage*, not as employed only by particular individuals, or under particular circumstances ; useful, finally, as being of *considerable*, not of little use, of use for a considerable, not for a trifling *purpose*.

I have been at some pains to define the exact acceptation of the term *utility*, in its more ordinary employment, that I may be the better able to distinguish from that its philosophical use ; for, to the difference between the former or narrower, and the latter, or wider acceptation, may be traced most of the objections that have been urged against the principle of utility, and perhaps some of the errors of the supporters of that principle.

Some degree of confusion, that might perhaps have been avoided, has arisen from its not being sufficiently settled, either on the part of the friends, or the opponents of utility, whether the quality so denominated is to be understood as applied to the *action*, or to the *effect* of the action. And, though, in neither way, would the term, *if used with absolutely strict propriety*, serve to denote the principle of moral distinctions, the manner of its employment for this purpose is easy to be understood, and easy to be justified.

The character of *utility* then is, without respect

to the idiomatical restrictions above pointed out, ascribed to any action that is the *means* of producing an *effect* in any degree, or in any way, agreeable to, or desired, or valued by any living being—any being susceptible of pleasing or painful impressions.

And though utility is not so properly applied to the *effect*, as to the *action* (or means of producing it) yet, as what is of utility *for* an end is of utility *to* the being to whom it is an end, utility, or use, in this view, will correspond in meaning with *worth* or *value* absolutely taken, and therefore may be quite properly applied to characterize an effect that is, in any way or degree, valuable, desirable, agreeable.

Understanding, then, that every *effect* is of utility that is more or less *of value*, more or less *beneficial*—every *action* of utility that produces such an effect,—I can have no hesitation in maintaining, that the *utility* of actions is the sole principle from which their obligation can, by any possibility, be deduced. — But leaving, for the present, the defence of this general position, it will be proper to give some particular instances of that species of objection which the preceding observations have been intended to obviate.

Applying the term *utility* in that restricted sense in which it exclusively characterizes *means*, in opposition to *ends*, or using it to qualify the *effect* instead of the *action*, the opposers of the doctrine

of utility have generally been at considerable pains to maintain such propositions as these:—there is an intrinsic value in *truth* independently of its consequences; there is an original gratification in possessing the love of others, without regard to the beneficial effects which we may thence reap; there is a pleasure in the mere possession of power,—and the like: propositions, from which this inference is understood to flow,—these things are valuable on their own account—*therefore*—it is not on account of their utility. — Now it may be a very rational question to inquire, are truth, power, the applause and respect of men, valuable in themselves as ultimate ends, or merely as the means of obtaining other ends — and, for my own part, I cannot hesitate in thinking that they are in themselves valuable; but, that they are valuable, that they are objects of desire, is just that for which it would be said that they are of utility; or at least, that actions effecting what is thus valuable or desirable, are of utility. If any one could say of truth, that it is perceived to be right, independently of its being an object of desire or agreeable to the minds of rational beings, this would indeed be saying that the obligation to regard truth is not founded on its utility. But the desirableness or agreeableness of truth, is the cause, not the effect of its being morally fit. My preference of a true account of any transaction above a false one, is not identical with my appro-

bation of the sincerity of the speaker. On the contrary, I approve the speaker for doing something (i. e. telling the truth) which is, in its own nature, agreeable and desirable to me, and all other rational beings ; and the contrary of which is, in like manner, disagreeable and offensive. In short, whether truth (here taken as an instance of a certain class of objects) is desirable merely as a means, or both as a means and an end, is one question. Whether, supposing it an end, that end can be said to possess utility, is another. Whether, on the same supposition, it is an end, merely in so far as it is an object of moral approbation, or whether its being thus an object of approbation presupposes it to possess a previous value,—this is a third question. Upon the first question, the supporters of the doctrine of utility are under no necessity of arguing. The second is a question of words. The latter alternative of the third question, is all they are concerned to maintain. In regard to a fourth question that may be asked, namely, whether it is always for the sake of utility that we speak truth rather than falsehood, this will be afterwards considered. In the mean time the question may be answered, quite consistently with the doctrine of utility, in the negative.

To such objections to the doctrine of utility as are implied in the following questions—what utility can there be in executing the dying request

of a friend, or in defending his reputation after his death ; what utility in telling him the truth, when a lie would please him equally well ; or how is it contrary to utility to debauch his wife without his knowledge, or to intercept a present he never expected, — to such objections, I say, there is surely no difficulty in furnishing an answer. Does a man enjoy any satisfaction or happiness, is he freed from any uneasiness or distress, by believing that he is not deceived or cheated, that his anxious wishes will be fulfilled after his death,* that the honour of his wife will not at any time be secretly destroyed ? — But how could he enjoy the satisfaction or be freed from the distress, but by its being made morally obligatory on men to act or refrain from acting, unknown to him, in the way

* The only question I have any concern with at present, is, whence arises a moral *obligation* to act in a particular manner in certain cases ; with the mere motive or impulse usually prevalent in such cases, I have now nothing to do. I shall just here observe however that, in executing the will of a deceased friend, I am much mistaken if we have not a persuasion (illusive or not) that he actually beholds us, or will come to know of what we have done. We are forcibly moved at the thought of his inability to express his wishes ; and his imagined look of entreaty, bound as he is by the mysterious and invisible chain which prevents him from giving utterance to those wishes, goes at once to our hearts in a manner more direct and powerful than the most urgent and passionate entreaties of the living man. And if reason cannot assure us that a departed fellow mortal may behold our acts, it can never assure us of the contrary.

that, if known, would thus affect him? — Is this any reason *at all* why such obligation ought to exist? (i. e. why men ought to act in the manner supposed:)—Is not this reason the *utility* of the action? (in the wide sense in which the term is taken:)—Would not this utility be a reason and a *sufficient* one even if there were no other?—What more then can be required?

Here, undoubtedly, the obligation is deduced, not from the effect of the individual action (for, by the supposition, it has no effect) but from that of the species of action. But this, to some people, is not enough. They will still persist in asking whether there is not a moral obligation in regard even to a *single* action of any of these descriptions, and without respect to others of a similar kind. I answer that a single action, taken as the subject of a proposition expressive of a moral judgment, is a non-entity and absurdity. It is impossible to form a proposition regarding an individual action, a proposition which will not apply to every other individual of the species; unless the truth of the proposition depends on something belonging to that individual, and to it alone. Nothing can be true of the individual, that is not true of the species; and, conversely, nothing can be true of the species, that is not true of the individual.* If a species of act then is right or wrong,

* This subject has been popularly illustrated by Paley — than whom no one ever possessed a greater talent for popular

it is altogether idle to ask whether an individual might not be right or wrong, even without regard to the species. The individual and the species are here one thing, expressed in different words. The individual is really this, and that and every individual of the species. It *is* the species.

But, again, would any one ask here, whether after a person has enjoyed the assurance that something will be done, or the contrary, in his absence, or after his death, we might not then (since the purpose has been answered) omit doing it? Such a question involves an entire absurdity; an absurdity, too, arising from the same sort of vain attempt to speak of the individual, as distinct from the species. The proposition, that you may omit the action, cannot be at once true and false, or true to one person, false to another. If true in this case, it must be so in every case. In short, he who should ask such a question, might be conceived to threaten some one who might be subject to his power and authority, in the following manner: — If you do something which I now forbid,

illustration. The truth of Paley's doctrine on this head has been most unaccountably called in question; and I have been desirous to shew, here and elsewhere, by arguments of a more technical description, that what Paley has denominated the formation of general rules in morality, is not merely a matter of fact, — as if we might or might not make general rules, — but that we are absolutely obliged by the laws of thought and language, to speak of actions, not as individuals, but as species and classes.

you will receive a severe punishment ; no doubt, after you have done it, it will be quite useless to punish you, and you will not be punished ; but I tell you at present, you will be punished !

So much as regards the question *in what* the utility of actions consists.

In regard to the second question, as *to whom* actions morally good, are supposed to be of utility, it is to be observed, first, that utility is sometimes taken to signify what benefits the agent himself. To say that utility, in this sense, is the measure of right, would be to dissolve morality altogether and sanction every crime ; for the stolen goods are of utility to the thief, and the removal of his victim is of utility to the murderer. Though the doctrine of utility has never been maintained in this meaning,* nor could possibly be maintained by any

* Yet it seems to have been the doctrine of the ancient theorists that the pursuit of *good to himself* is the only conceivable motive by which a rational being can act ; and they merely dispute what that good is,—whether virtue or pleasure. By reckoning virtue a pleasure, however, even those who declared in favour of pleasure obviated such a dangerous consequence from their general principle as that in the text.

The ancient systems possess this signal defect, that, while they are founded on the principle that an agent comes under a moral obligation, only by a regard to his own greatest good, they yet assume for the greatest good, or as forming a chief part of the greatest good, that, (namely *virtue*) which assuredly cannot be shewn to be such, but on the recognition of *obligation* existing *independently* of this regard to the greatest good.

man in his senses, yet I am not sure that some of its opponents have not been disingenuous enough to give it such an appearance : at all events, I believe its name suggests to many who are ignorant of its nature, a suspicion of its being liable to such an imputation ; and that an undue prejudice has, in consequence, arisen against it.

A doctrine, however, involving this as its fundamental position, namely, that the good of the agent is the sole standard of right, but qualified in regard to the manner in which this good is represented as being most effectually promoted, has, I believe, found some supporters. According to these, the rules of virtue are those which a man would lay down for his conduct, who should form a sufficiently just and enlarged view of that in which his real and permanent happiness consisted, and the means by which it was to be accomplished. I need not say that the system exhibited in this treatise bears no correspondence with the one now described, — concerning which I would only observe, that I neither believe a man's own good to be the only object of pursuit ; nor that the practice of virtue would best secure it if it were.*

* The system of Paley differs essentially from those now described ; for the *object* of all moral rules, according to him, is the promotion of the happiness, not of the *agent*, but of the species : the *obligation* on the agent to observe these rules, however, he holds to consist in a regard to his *own good*, which

But, secondly, the doctrine of utility has been principally found objectionable when the term has been taken in that meaning, in which, as synonymous with *expediency*, it is made to stand opposed to *justice or right*; and it has been represented as the necessary consequence of admitting the principle of utility, that, provided a balance of happiness is, on the whole, produced by any action or mode of acting, the rights of individuals are not to be regarded; or rather that there can be no justice, no right, inconsistent with the greatest possible amount of happiness.

Now, in the *first* place, it seems to me that to represent justice and utility as opposed, is to make an entire confusion of ideas. Justice, or right, is not one thing, and utility another. Justice is merely the *mode* in which that which is of utility or the contrary ought to be *distributed*: a *right* must be a right to something that is of utility to the possessor of the right. Utility may be promoted without a regard to justice; but were there not utility and its contrary, justice could not even have an existence, being only employed about utility as its subject.

Now the fact is, that it is to the *subject* of obli-

is most effectually and permanently promoted by obeying the will of God, who wills the general happiness.

The *subject* of virtue, then, according to him, is the general good, but the *obligation* to practise virtue, arises from a regard to the agent's own good.

gation almost exclusively that the advocates of utility have directed their attention; and they have as little thought of explaining how the enjoyment of what is of utility ought to be *distributed*, as they have thought of explaining why utility ought to be promoted at all. All this they have supposed to be alike understood; or, if any one please to say so, they have been guilty of overlooking it. But does this interfere with the truth of their main position? They tell us that all actions producing useful effects are right, the contrary wrong. This position holds good under all circumstances; nor can its truth be in the least disturbed by any discussion as to the share of utility which different beings ought to enjoy as relative to one another.

But on whatever we may found the obligation to promote utility *at all* (whether the promotion of utility is the dictate of reason, founded on the very conception of utility — or that it is what constitutes the gratification of a peculiar inward sense — or what is commanded by the Deity) from whatever source we may imagine this obligation to be derived, we can just as easily suppose that from the same source may be derived an obligation to observe a just distribution in the promotion of happiness and relief of misery; and, in particular, an obligation not to promote the happiness of one being, by inflicting misery on another. Thus Paley, who founds moral obligation on a re-

gard to the will of God, may be taken to mean, and, no doubt, has meant, that God willed that the happiness of one should not be purchased by the misery of another; and that he willed the distribution of happiness and misery to be equal, or according to the deserts of different individuals: each being rewarded or punished according to his own guilt or merit.

As it is only in regard to what is of *utility* or the contrary, then, that certain rules of *distribution* can be supposed to exist, to ask whether or not it is for the sake of utility that those rules should be observed, is, if intelligible at all, but a question of words; or, at all events, any consideration regarding the manner in which utility should be promoted among different individuals, does not so properly respect the question whether the utility of an action is that which makes it morally right, as *why* or *how* its utility should make it so.—Why ought food and raiment to be given to six indigent persons? Because it is of utility to them (i. e. it promotes their ease and enjoyment, or removes their distress). But is it of utility that relief should be distributed among the six rather than all given to one? — or is it contrary to utility that it should be taken away from other six equally in want of it and given to these? Now certainly these questions would be thought rather extraordinary ones; or, if they can receive any answer at all, they form part of the inquiry, not whether

it is for the sake of utility or not that we give food and raiment to the poor, but why we should do so even supposing it to be of utility. Whatever reason there is for promoting utility *at all*, there is the same reason for distributing it after a certain *mode*.

Benevolence, or a regard to utility, can no more exist without a regard to *justice*, than matter can exist without figure. Suppose matter, and figure follows—suppose benevolence and justice follows. To do justice, is an act of benevolence; and the most benevolent man (if his benevolence is a moral principle, and not merely an instinct or natural affection) will have the greatest regard to justice. Benevolence must diffuse itself equally over its objects, as necessarily as water diffuses itself over a level; it can no more be limited to a part of such objects, to the neglect, still less to the hurt, of another part, than water poured out on a level surface will stand in a heap.*

If, then, an obligation to promote utility implies an obligation not to hurt one being for the sake of benefiting others, and if, as I have elsewhere shewn, to take away what a man is *possessed* of, or what he has been explicitly or implicitly promised (the principal cases of *right* to which utility is viewed as standing opposed) necessarily and in

* Nor does benevolence imply a regard only to *distributive*, but also to *retributive* justice. Benevolence towards the deserving or innocent must turn to resentment against the guilty.

the nature of the case produces pain, as abstracting from a man's actual or calculated means of pleasure or happiness, — then these *rights* are clearly involved in the principle of utility.

So far, however, it will seem that the principle of utility furnishes, at most, a reason why we ought not to inflict positive evil on one being for the sake of producing positive good to another. But there are undoubtedly cases that would be allowed to constitute an entire violation of *right*, where the evil created, if any, would be altogether insignificant — the good produced, or the evil removed, very great. Now in regard to such cases,

It is to be observed, in the *second* place, that the obligation, as a *general rule*, to respect possession* and promises, admits of being clearly shewn by reference to the consequences of actions taken as *species* and *classes*. This has been done by Paley,—on whose system, accordingly, founded, as every one knows, on the principle of utility, not one of the rights which the supporters of that principle are usually accused of subverting, wants either a place or a ground. And I would beg to ask of the numerous revilers of that system, whether the advantages of the *rule* to respect possession and promises, the evils of violating such rule

* I use the term *possession* instead of *property*, because the latter includes the idea of *right*, and therefore forecloses the argument. Our question is just why *possession* should constitute *property*.

would not be *sufficient* reason for the observance of it, even if no other were assigned? If they admit this, their objections must have reference, not to what Paley has advanced, but to what he has, or is imagined to have, excluded. But if there are other reasons besides what Paley has stated, in treating particularly of these obligations, are there any but what must resolve into Paley's principle?

If Paley has meant to say that the obligation to respect possession and promises is perceived to rest wholly, or even more immediately, on a regard to consequences in general, I cannot but think he would be mistaken. The form of words in which a promise is conveyed, necessarily imparts an expectation, authorises a dependence:*

* If the mere advantages derived from, or evils avoided by the *use* of promises, the *institution* of property and the *practice* of gratitude were the sole reasons for respecting these rights (which Paley might perhaps with some colour be taken to maintain) then, if I mistake not, not to give a promise at all would be as bad as to break one; a law preventing the acquisition of property, would be as unjust as one taking it away after it was acquired; and a benefactor would have as good claims upon other persons, as upon the persons he had benefited.

I cannot forbear remarking farther, that any defects which Paley's statements may appear to contain, may be regarded as traceable to the influence of the term *utility*, considered as bearing the strict meaning formerly assigned to it — since, in his explications of the nature of the different species of right and co-relative obligation, he seems to make the fulfilment of the obligation not an *end* in itself but the *means* of an ulterior

the same expectation and dependence is implied in the idea of mere possession. In the abstract, then, to violate possession, to violate a promise, must give pain, (must be contrary to *utility*,) must be wrong; and the perception of the abstract obligation is the primary one, and maintains itself while unopposed, and even while opposed by considerations of only a certain strength. But the abstract obligation is not felt to be one that must necessarily be superior to every possible consideration. To question whether a promise ought always to be kept, whether possession ought always to be respected, is not a pure absurdity. It is not utterly unreasonable to demand that a ground should be assigned, why (certain defined specialities excepted) promises and possession should in-

end. Promises must be kept, not because individual promisees are hurt by the breach of them, but because the fulfilment is the *means* of creating confidence among mankind. Property must be respected, not immediately because the individual proprietor suffers in being deprived of it, but because the observance of his right is the *means* of maintaining the system of property. Favours must be requited, not as saving pain or disappointment to the benefactor, but as the *means* of promoting the practice of beneficence. — Now it is sufficiently obvious that there may as justly be said to be *utility* in the performance of those duties in respect of their immediate, as of their remote effects; and that the obligation might, and would, be allowed, by any supporter of that principle, to rest jointly on both, or on any other sort of useful tendency they might have.

variably be respected. This ground is what Paley has assigned — a regard to general consequences ; and, in this way, I confess that Paley's theory seems to me to be that alone which will reach the bottom of the subject. — In the general enunciation of his theory, Paley deduces the right or wrong of an action from its whole consequences, particular and general ; and if, in treating of the several species of obligation in detail, he has rested more upon the general than upon the particular consequences, it is for the purpose of establishing the paramount authority of such obligations, in those cases where, without a regard to general consequences, it might seem to fail ; and, as I suspect, really would fail.

Take a case where a small part of the superfluous riches which one individual possesses by no merit of his own, but by the mere gift of fortune, would relieve from the deepest misery a hundred individuals, whose poverty is no wise imputable to them as a fault — view this case in the abstract, and without respect to any one circumstance or consideration beyond the naked facts of the case—banish all thought about the possible abuse of the precedent, and the evils arising from insecurity of property — all question about the *competency* of any particular third party to interfere—look at the case simply as one between two such parties, and as they, and only such as they, are respectively affected, — and say, would it be *unjust* that the one

should be deprived of a superfluity, to save a hundred from the severest distress? would not the contrary be just? If this is refused to me, the point will admit of no dispute. It is a matter of simple reference to the moral faculty. But if there is any hesitation in admitting it, I for my own part cannot doubt that it is owing to the difficulty we feel in divesting ourselves of the *habit* of judging we have acquired in such cases. If the influence of this habit could for a moment be removed, I would confidently appeal to any one's candour, whether the first untutored judgment of the human heart is not such as I have now stated — whether, in vindicating the right of property in such a case, it is not entirely for a *rule* — a *principle* we contend; — and that rule, that principle, founded on a regard to general utility. — So far then from saying that, in maintaining the rights of possession, in cases of this nature, justice is followed in opposition to expediency, it would, in my apprehension, be nearer the truth to say, that justice is sacrificed to expediency; or at most — what is indeed the strict truth — that a certain degree of injustice is suffered, because any attempt towards the correction of that, would draw *more* injustice along with it.

But lastly, supposing it could be shewn, (what I, for one, think never could be shewn,) that human happiness would, on the whole, be greater in amount, and not more unfairly divided, if, — in

certain defined cases, or at discretion, on the view of an overbalance of utility, — property and promises should cease to be respected, and that this were understood and agreed upon among men accordingly — what would be the consequence? — simply this, — that promises, like unstamped notes, would cease to be received or offered. Their very use would be abolished. So of property: there could be nothing of that nature in existence. And can any one deny that if — (the *if* is indeed an important one) — mankind would be *happier* without the use of property or promises — then there *ought not* to be property or promises?*

In their arguments on this subject, the opponents of the doctrine of utility always carry the notions and feelings arising out of a certain actual situation or system of things, into another situation or system, where such notions or feelings could not exist. That a right ought not to be violated, is purely an identical proposition. Our question regards the existence of the right. Now the essence of a right is the dependence and expectation — the dependence and expectation rest on the agreement and understanding. Remove then the agreement and understanding, and the right cannot acquire existence. No doubt, independently of such agreement or understanding, a

* Of the utter absurdity of such a supposition there can be no question. But the absurdity is inherent in the objection — does not arise out of the answer.

possession may be actually assumed, a promise actually passed ; but the abstract obligation to respect property or promises is, as we have seen, not essentially superior to every other consideration whatever. There are unlawful promises, there is unlawful possession. All that would be necessary to make all promises, all possession unlawful, would be the supposition in which we are arguing ; — and there can be no *right* to what is *unlawful*.

Though the immediate ground of obligation, then, in such instances, is to be found in the nature of the case, taken in the abstract, the final, ultimate ground must be sought somewhere else — and that can be no where but in a reference to general utility. Thus it is as true, in one sense, that the obligation is founded in a regard to general utility, as it is untrue in another ; and thus each party of the combatants in this dispute have truth on their side. But if not on general utility alone, it is on *utility*, either particular or general, and on nothing but utility, that all notions of right or justice must ultimately rest.

To the opposition conceived to lie between utility and justice, is generally added one between utility and truth. But as justice is a *mode* of *distributing* utility, truth is a thing possessing it. As any opposition between utility and justice is not any opposition between utility, on the one hand, and any thing different from utility, on the other, but merely an opposition between the distributing

of what is of utility in one way, and the doing so in another way, — so any opposition between utility and truth can only be an opposition between one sort of utility and another — but what can be of *more* utility than truth? To say that a man ought not to sacrifice truth for utility, is much the same sort of sense as to say that he ought not to sacrifice his health for his happiness.* There can-

* So far as I can understand Mr. Stewart's argument, he would seem to maintain, when talking of "the qualities connected with the different virtues," and of the "unity of design" by which the observance of veracity and justice is rendered profitable both to society and individuals, that the benefits resulting from these virtues are encouragements positively annexed to the practice of them. But is it possible to abstract from justice and veracity the idea of their saving some pain or creating some pleasure, and leave them what they are in the scale of moral duties? Would they, if this were abstracted, still possess what Mr. S. calls their "intrinsic rectitude?" Mr. S. observes that "even although justice and veracity should have been enjoined by the Deity, not on account of their intrinsic rectitude, but of their utility, yet with regard to man they are sacred and indispensable laws, — laws which he never transgresses without undergoing the penalties of self-condemnation and remorse." — The question is not whether justice and veracity are not sacred and indispensable laws, but whether they cannot be shewn to be sacred and indispensable laws upon the principle of utility — whether their intrinsic rectitude has not a necessary regard to utility. Mr. S. again observes that "unless we admit such duties as justice, veracity, and gratitude, to be immediately and imperatively sanctioned by the authority of reason, and of conscience, it follows, as a necessary inference, that we are

not be benevolence, or a regard to utility, without a regard to truth. A benevolent man may violate the truth, as a benevolent judge may let a criminal escape, or a benevolent physician spare a patient the pain of taking a nauseous medicine. But this sort of benevolence is a mere instinctive affection, or it is one that mistakes its object. What good it does, is done at the expense of a greater evil.

The result of the foregoing investigation may, I think, be summed up thus :

I. That the question whether the utility of actions is that from which their obligation is derived, is, in a great measure, a verbal question.

II. That, taken as a verbal question, and looking to the strict meaning of the term, as settled by ordinary usage, the opponents of utility are

bound to violate them whenever, by doing so, we have a prospect of advancing any of the essential interests of society, or, (which amounts to the same thing) that a good end is sufficient to sanctify whatever means may appear to us to be necessary for its accomplishment," —the answer to which is simply this, that *a case cannot by possibility happen*, in which the essential interests of society can be advanced by the violation of justice and veracity, if we take into account (which the principle of utility requires us to do) the suffering inflicted by the particular violation and by other violations of the same species and kind, which, if the particular one is right, must be right also. But does it never happen that a thing may be useful or expedient, and yet not just? A thing that is unjust to *you*, may be useful to *me* ; but a thing that is *unjust* to you, cannot be *useful* to you : that is, a thing that is unjust cannot be, on the whole, useful.

rather entitled to the advantage in the dispute. It may be added, that the advocates of utility, by failing to define the term as applied by them, have given room for misconstruction of their views.

But thirdly, that taking *utility* in its general and absolute, instead of its *specific and relative* import, there is no action reckoned morally obligatory of which utility is not the distinguishing characteristic ; and, conversely, there is no action possessing this characteristic, that is not, so far at least, reckoned morally obligatory.

I now proceed, in order to meet another class of objections to the doctrine of utility, to examine how far that doctrine requires us to suppose that a regard to utility is, or ought to be, the actual principle or guide of moral conduct among men.

CHAPTER III.

OF *ESSENTIAL* OBJECTIONS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY.

THE second class of objections to those systems which have made utility the foundation of moral duty, are those which, without reference to a more or less extended application of the term *utility*, are conceived to lie against the doctrine generally, and in its essential features.

It has been supposed conclusive against this doctrine to shew that utility is not always, in fact, the immediate *object* of our approbation, when we behold good actions performed by others, or the immediate *end* we have in view, when we perform good actions ourselves.

Now if, by urging that utility is not the immediate object of approbation, it is meant only to be shewn that the utility of an action is not that by which we estimate the *virtue or merit of the agent* — to this proposition—and that not merely in the manner of a conclusion from the fact now stated, but as what has its own independent grounds in the nature of the subject to which it relates — I give

my most ready and explicit assent. We do not approve the agent, that is, we do not reckon him virtuous or meritorious, deserving of praise or reward, for the utility of his action, either in regard to the event, or to his intention. Neither the amount of the actual, nor of the intended utility, is the measure of his virtue or merit. These consist in his desire or endeavour to fulfil moral obligation: and whether obligation depends upon utility or not, it is evident that two different agents may have different degrees of regard for the same obligation, different degrees of inclination to promote the same amount of utility. To say that the virtue or merit of an agent, in performing any morally good action, is to be measured by the amount of its utility, is just the same sort of error that it would be to say that a man's avarice is to be measured by the amount of the gain or saving which, in any particular case, he might be intent upon effecting. The truth, in both instances, is rather the reverse. The less the utility — the less the gain or the saving which a person makes an object of interest — the greater must be his benevolence in the one case, his avarice in the other. Now I apprehend that the defenders of this doctrine have not, in general, meant to apply it as explaining wherein the moral *virtue of an agent* consists, but wherein the *obligation of the action* consists, or what the reason is why that action should be performed; or, at most, they have been chargeable with a loose-

ness (and this in common with their opponents) in confounding these two things, — considering a good action as being just what a good man would perform; and a good man, as one who should perform good actions: a notion not absolutely untrue, nor, for common purposes, entirely inadmissible. A very great part of the objections to the doctrine of utility are made against it on this supposition; as if the utility, real or intended, of the action, were represented as measuring the virtue of the agent.* This may be at once

* It is to be observed, as regards the case of Paley, that so far has he been from anticipating any such objection as this, that he has not even broken his text by hinting at the distinction by which it is to be obviated, but dispatches the whole matter in a trifling note, as something which was almost too obvious to require notice. “Actions in the abstract are right or wrong according to their tendency; the agent is virtuous or vicious, according to his design. Thus, if the question be, whether relieving common beggars be right or wrong? we inquire into the tendency of such a conduct to the public advantage or inconvenience. If the question be, whether a man remarkable for this sort of bounty is to be esteemed virtuous for that reason, we inquire into his design, whether his liberality sprang from charity or from ostentation. *It is evident that our concern is with actions in the abstract.*” (Note to Chap. vi. of Book ii.) Can any thing be plainer than this?

To Dr. Brown’s question, then, whether we praise a man for the same reason that we praise a chest of drawers, or a steam-engine, the answer is this:—we praise the *mode of conduct* pursued by the man for precisely the same reason—we direct his conduct precisely on the same principle—that we construct the machinery, and direct the motions, of a steam-

made evident by a reference to the sort of cases usually cited by the opponents of this doctrine — cases invariably of exalted generosity, magnanimity or warmth of affection, — the feelings excited in regard to which, feelings of love, admiration, and reverence, cannot, it is justly contended, have mere *utility* for their object. But the object of such feelings as these is obviously some mental disposition or effort of an *agent*, tending to an end. The question which the doctrine of utility professes to answer is not, how do we estimate the disposition or effort — (this we do merely by the strength of the disposition or effort, which, of course, need bear no direct—will often bear an inverse — proportion to the utility) but how do we estimate the end to which the disposition or effort tends;—not what makes us admire “Leonidas and his little band”* more than we should have admired another band who had fought less courageously than they; but why we admire the end for which Leonidas’s band fought more than any end of a different kind for

engine,—namely, to a useful purpose. What we praise the *man* for, is not the question which the advocate of utility answers; and it is but one question among several comprehended in the general inquiry,—in what does the moral goodness of an action consist? We praise a man for his anxiety to do what he ought to do: but what *ought* a man to do? — what we should praise him for, says Dr. Brown:— what is of utility, says Paley. — Which of these answers, I pray, is the more rational or satisfactory?

* Dr. Brown.

which it would, of course, have been possible to fight as well;—not why we are touched with “sacrifices made to gratitude, to parental duty, to filial piety, to conjugal affection;”* but why we reckon the ends for which such sacrifices are made, rather than other ends, good ends. Does any one approve of making sacrifices at random and for no *useful end*?

From want of attention to this distinction, it has happened that some of the opponents of utility have been just as far wide of the truth in what they would allow, as in what they would refuse, to that principle. We may admire *benevolence*, they tell us, on account of its utility;† but how can we be said to admire *gratitude* or *piety towards the Deity* on this account? — Here it is entirely overlooked, that benevolence, even towards men, considered as a *character or disposition* which we love an agent for being possessed of, stands upon precisely the same footing in regard to utility, that gratitude does, or that any of the devout affections we bear towards the Deity do. We do not then

* Mr. Stewart — to whose and Dr. Brown’s reasonings chiefly, these remarks bear reference.

† To make virtue consist in *benevolence*, and to make the goodness of an action consist in its *utility*, are considered as the same theory; so that utility would be admitted as the foundation of virtue, so far as virtue consists in benevolence. See Price, Butler, and Stewart, also Dr. Adam Smith’s chapter on the “systems which make virtue consist in benevolence.” (Th. of Mor. Sent. Part vii. s. 2. Ch. iii.)

approve of *benevolence* for its utility, any more than we approve of gratitude.

Gratitude is either a regard to a particular moral obligation, or a mere natural affection (in which latter sense we have now no concern with it.) And whereas we are under a greater obligation to do good to those who have done good to us, than to those who have not; and as the virtue of an agent is in proportion to his regard to moral obligation, — want of regard to a greater obligation must evince less moral virtue than want of regard to a less; and our disapprobation must in consequence be greater. In both cases it is a character or quality of the mind that is disapproved—to which utility can as little be applied in the one instance as in the other. Gratitude and benevolence differ only in this, that the one is a regard to a greater obligation to promote utility, the other a regard to a smaller obligation to promote utility.

Do we say that a man is under an obligation to be grateful, though his gratitude can be of no use to its object? so we may say also that he is under an obligation to be benevolent. For in either case we can only mean that his gratitude, his benevolence, considered as qualities of his mind, and without regard to *effects*, will move our love and approbation. Here still, gratitude is just as much allied to utility as benevolence is.*

* If we can say in any other sense that gratitude is obligatory without regard to its utility to its object, we must mean

Approbation, in one agent, of the moral excellence of another agent, is a necessary attendant of a regard to moral obligation in the first; and only differs from original moral excellence, as regards its relation to utility, in being, so to speak, a step farther removed from that utility.— Piety to God (so far as the present argument is concerned) may be taken as a compound of moral approbation and gratitude.

Gratitude, benevolence, love of virtuous agents, then, considered merely as *dispositions*, and without regard to their effects, are not, properly speaking, *duties*, or what are obligatory, because they are really not actions at all: they are not the doing of any thing, the producing of any effect. They are *virtues* — our admiration of which is certainly not measured by their utility.

It will be found that according as they have confined their attention to one or other of the two great component parts of the notion of an action (the obligation of the action and the character of the agent) different theorists have maintained, that a grateful *disposition* is to be cultivated as a means of inducing us to perform acts of gratitude; but precisely the same consideration will apply to the case of benevolence.

But if gratitude be viewed, as it really is, as something which, of *itself*, and without regard to any effects to which it may prompt, is *agreeable* or *pleasing* to the benefactor, then I say the grateful disposition is of *utility* to the benefactor, and as such, the cultivation of it is obligatory in the most proper sense.

some, that utility is the sole object, and others, that it is in no degree the object, of approbation : and both sides with perfect truth, because each has been answering a different question. The advocates of utility suppose the virtue of the agent ascertained, and then ask, how is this virtue to be exercised ? what is he to do ? and they properly answer, what is of most utility. On the other hand, the opposers of this doctrine suppose the fitness of certain ends to be ascertained, and then ask, when do we most approve an agent who pursues these ends, or when do we most blame him when he pursues their opposites ? and they properly answer, we approve of him when he pursues them from a sense of obligation, when he makes a sacrifice to attain them : we disapprove most of his not doing them when the omission was towards a benefactor, when the performance was easy, and the like. Each party thus assumes what the other states,* and states what the other assumes ; and each, with perfect truth, when he

* All those writers who have spoken of justice, benevolence, or gratitude, as *virtues*, or dispositions of mind, have expressed themselves (and justly — according to their views) against the principle of utility ; while this principle, on the contrary, has been universally adopted, where justice, benevolence, and gratitude, have been considered as *modes of acting* for the production of an external effect. “ Justice,” says Mr. Dugald Stewart, “ denotes that disposition which leads us, in cases where our own temper or passions are concerned, to determine, and to act, without being biassed by partial considerations.”

looks only to that part of the subject upon which he is himself intent, thinks all that is said by the other entirely from the purpose. — Never was the apologue of the two knights and the shield better illustrated.

But while the advocates of utility admit that the virtue and merit of actions are not measured by their utility, they say that, as the virtue and merit presuppose the obligation, and the obligation depends on the utility, utility is, after all, at the foundation of the whole matter.*

Now, that there is another sense in which we use the word justice, is apparent from this, that we often say, a man ought to *do* justice. If we here substitute Mr. Stewart's definition of the term, for the term itself, we should say — a man ought to do "that disposition which leads," &c. which would be absurd. Now that which justice is a disposition to do, is what some other writers would call justice; and they would perhaps define justice to be the promotion of happiness (utility) equally, or according to desert, and without hurting one for the benefit of another. When this *effect* is produced in any particular case, we say justice has been *done*: the obligation or duty to produce such effect, is the obligation or duty of justice: the disposition to practice this duty, is the virtue of justice; and the grounds on which we estimate the obligation, are perfectly distinct from those on which we estimate the virtue.

* In the following passage, Dr. Brown appears to fall into the same sort of idea with Mr. Stewart, in considering utility as merely an *annexed* consequence to virtue — "Such a harmony the Deity *has established* of virtue and utility, — that of which we approve as virtuous, is, as a general mode of conduct, useful, though it is not on account of our estimate of its general useful tendency that we give it our immediate appro-

In assuming, however, to the extent I have done, that utility is the ground of obligation, I am anticipating conclusions yet to be established,—for the opponents of utility would not be satisfied with even this partition of the disputed territory. They would deny that even the *obligation* of an action (in the strict sense in which I use that term) is estimated from its utility. This they do on the ground (as I have said) that utility is not the immediate object that men have, or generally could have, in view, when performing actions as morally good, — to which they add, that the most pernicious consequences would follow, if men were, in reality, to govern their conduct by a sole regard to this principle.

The chief occasion for this objection has been found in that part of the explication of the doctrine of utility, given by its supporters, in which they teach us to estimate the morality of actions, not by a reference to the consequences of the individual action alone, but to those also of the

bation. That of which we disapprove as vice, is, as a general mode of conduct, injurious to society, though it is not on that general account we regard it with instant contempt, or indignation, or horror. *By this adaptation of our emotions, however, the same advantage is obtained, as if we approved of virtue directly as useful to the world," &c.* — But is it not strange, that an advantage could be obtained by giving us a constitution leading to the promotion of utility, if yet utility is not that which we morally approve, i. e. not what we view as *of advantage* at all !

species to which it belongs. In opposition to the principle here put forth, namely, that the *general utility* or mischief of any species of action, or, as Paley expresses it, the utility or mischief of such actions “on the whole, and at the long run,” is what must be taken as the measure of their moral obligation or the contrary, much pains have been taken to shew that no such degree of knowledge, consideration, or judgment, as this representation would make it necessary for moral agents to employ, either is, or can be, employed by men in general or by any men whatsoever, in the circumstances in which they ordinarily perform, and even rightly perform, their various duties. Much is said about the instinctive promptitude with which even children, who are entirely unable to stretch their view to remote or extended results, can determine upon the propriety or impropriety, the excellence or turpitude of particular actions; and upon the quickness and certainty of our moral judgments in common, so inconsistent with the notion of a previous calculation, which, on the supposition, must be alike nice, wide, and intricate.

Now with a view to meet these arguments, I would beg to observe,

First, That most of the instances which have been adduced in order to shew that men are not influenced in their actions by considerations of general utility, are really *not moral actions at all*; but actions, which, if they are morally obligatory,

are not, in the instances described, performed *as such*, but performed instinctively, from the impulse of natural feelings or affections, or from a regard to reward or punishment. We are told, for instance, that a mother tends her offspring without ever thinking of general utility — so does a Greenland bear : — and therefore we must seek the source of *moral obligation* somewhere else than in the actual and immediate impulse which, in any particular instance, may lead to the acts of moral agents : since the same impulse produces the same acts in beings confessedly incapable of moral acting.

The point we maintain is, that the moral obligation of an action arises from its utility. How is this disproved by saying that men, in performing right actions, do not always act from a regard to moral obligation ?

Objections, then, to the doctrine of utility, taken from such instances as now described, are absolutely foreign to the purpose.

If the actions which are thus prompted by natural impulses, or by the hope of reward, or fear of punishment, are really in their own nature proper to be performed ; and if it is on account of their possessing this propriety that such impulses or motives to the performance of them have been furnished, — then it is not in the mind of the being who follows, but in that of the being who gave, the impulse, that we must seek for the pro-

priety of the action to which the impulse leads. The Deity, and not man, is really, in this case, the moral agent. Why then did the Deity implant, or, which is the same thing, why did he think it right to implant, such impulses? Does any one pretend to imagine any other reason but because those impulses were of utility; because they promoted the comfort, the happiness, the enjoyment of his creatures?

An objection of the class we are now considering is that founded on the assertion that it is not from a regard to utility that we commonly speak the truth. It would be nearly as much to the purpose to say that it is not from a regard to utility that we cry out when pained. We speak truth before we can be said to be moral beings at all. It would be of the very nature of *communication*—even if, as I think might be supposed, taking place among beings destitute of a reasoning or moral faculty,—to be true rather than false. The impulse to speak truth is found in the nature of the thing. The ground of the *obligation* is only to be looked for when the *impulse* (as frequently happens) is overcome.

Whatever perversity or ignorance, then, men might, *à priori*, be supposed to exhibit, in the application of the principle of utility to the guidance of conduct, the effects of their mistakes or perversions, in this particular, would necessarily be confined within certain limits. Comparatively few

of the actions on which the happiness of individuals and of the species mainly depend, are performed from a simple regard to moral principle; and when actions do not proceed purely from moral principle, they do not affect the present inquiry.

Mistaking the question which the principle of utility is employed to answer,—that, namely, which asks what is the common quality for which actions are approved as morally obligatory,—and supposing it to be this—why do men perform some actions, avoid others,—the opposers of this principle have usually urged the consideration I have been stating as an argument on their side of the debate; whereas its just use is to rebut the chief of their objections.*

* No writer seems to me more chargeable with this oversight than Mr. Stewart. Against the position that men always *do* act from a regard to utility, or that they *ought* always to act from their *own judgment* of utility, Mr. Stewart's reasonings would be valid. Against the position that the utility of an action is really the criterion of its morality, his arguments are entirely without effect. It is assuredly true, as Mr. Stewart observes, that "the peace and happiness of the world have not been left to depend upon the views which individuals might choose to form as to the means by which these ends might be obtained." But this proves, not that our ideas of moral duty are not formed upon views of utility, but that the happiness of the species has not been left to depend upon our sense of duty let it be formed how it will. To the performance of those actions which are most essential to our well-being, we are prompted by principles which would take effect if we never

I would remark, in the second place,

That even when men do act from a regard to obligation, it is not necessary to suppose that the foundation or reason of the obligation should always be present to their view ; nor does the absence of any particular reason from the view of the agent, prevent this from being the true foundation of the obligation.

That men perform many actions as obligatory, and yet without judging them to be obligatory for their utility, I very readily admit ; and why ? because in a great many cases men do not *judge* at all about the matter — they take it upon trust. A man believes that an action is obligatory, just as he believes that a certain operation in figures will extract the square or cube root of any quantity, without, in either case, thinking or knowing why. He receives the moral rule, as he does the arithmetical one, on authority, and without examination. But, if a mathematician were to offer to demonstrate to us the principle of the rule of evolution, should we tell him, — nay, this cannot be the true principle ; for hundreds extract the square and cube root every day without ever thinking or even knowing of such a principle ?

The moral opinions of men, as distinguished from moral impulses and feelings, are formed in attended to moral duty at all, or even were, like the brutes, incapable of comprehending it. It is idle then to argue from these actions against the doctrine of utility.

the same variety of ways as their opinions on any other practical subject. A man's belief of the mode of curing a disease, is perhaps founded on some current opinion of which no one knows the origin; perhaps on his confidence in the advice of a particular physician; perhaps on his own observation of its efficacy in particular instances; perhaps on general reasoning on the constitution and frame of the body. In the same way, some of our moral judgments are of the nature of prejudices; some of them are entertained on the authority of other beings, in whose wisdom and rectitude we place our confidence; some of them have arisen from observations of the effects of actions in particular instances; some of them from more comprehensive views of the general tendency of such actions. What is the truth, and on what the truth depends, are both distinct questions from that which regards the manner of our seeking or attaining the truth.

The objection then to the doctrine of utility, founded on the circumstance that men usually perform their moral duty without extending their view to general consequences, can only be allowed any weight, on its being shewn that men always determine the point of moral duty for themselves. If they do not, have those, it is to be asked, from whom they derive their opinions, have the legislators, the preachers, the moral writers, the more intelligent part of the community who lead the

less intelligent part, have these been without the aid of general views ?*

And, so far as men take their moral rules upon trust, evils arising from the misapplication of a general principle (let it be utility or what it will) can of course have no more place than where men act from mere instinct.

The opponents of the principle of utility indeed are in the constant habit of assuming it to be the necessary consequence of admitting that principle, that every man must be held to *judge for himself* what actions are of utility. But, by what process of reasoning do they make out this? Suppose I say that the end pursued by every sick man is the cure of his disorder, would any one dream of objecting to such a proposition, that, if every man were to take such medicines as he himself thought would cure his disorder, the half of mankind would kill themselves? Would it imply the affirmation that men always prescribe for themselves and dispense with the advice of a physician? Yet the objection is precisely the same, and applies with equal justice in each case. Whether a certain species of action will produce good or evil effects, is a point in regard to which there is a true and a false; and assuming this to be the fundamental point of morality, it is what we might

* That is, in the explanation, enforcement, or specific application of moral rules — for, in Christian countries, the rules themselves are ready provided to us.

suppose men would attain the knowledge of as they do other knowledge. Here, as on other subjects, we might presume, that truth, however discovered, would gradually establish itself over error; and that just rules of conduct would no more fail of being adopted, each individual judging for himself, than just rules of farming, of building, of navigation. In all of these does not every man judge for himself, in the same sense as we suppose him to do in morals?

And now, in the third place, setting aside the two classes of cases that have just been spoken of, and looking to those where men really do judge of their duty, there can be no difficulty in maintaining that they judge upon views of utility; and that the difficulty of so judging (even if we suppose that every man always does judge and ought to judge for himself—what, it will be seen, my argument does not in the least lead me to maintain) has been altogether exaggerated.

What reason do men ever think of assigning why an action should be performed, but that it serves for some use, that some person or persons will be the better if it, and such actions, are performed, the worse if such actions are not performed? what reason why an action should not be performed, but that it, or such actions, will do some hurt or evil? And if an action which, at first view, had seemed beneficial, is shewn to be pernicious, is not the opinion of its being right,

changed into one of its being wrong, and *mutatis mutandis*?

The representations we are required to admit of what would be the consequences if men were supposed to regulate their conduct by a regard to utility, must proceed upon one or other of the two following presumptions: either,

I. That, acting with sound views of utility, men would not do what is morally right; or

II. That they would not form sound views.

The question as to the validity of the first of these presumptions resolves into points discussed in the preceding section: its invalidity I must now assume as being proved.

The truth of the second presumption hangs mainly upon that of the first, unless we suppose men to have a natural preference for error. For it is hard to understand where the great difficulty can be in discovering whether actions are beneficial or mischievous; or how, in general, there can be much room for mistake on such a point.

Does it require so extraordinary a degree of reflection and ratiocination to discover that to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, to comfort the afflicted, gives ease or pleasure to these? (is of utility to them)—that to wound a man's person, to take away his effects, to disappoint his hopes, to blast his character, gives him pain or distress? (is pernicious to him.)—Surely it is a waste of words to speak to such a point as this.

Because the advocates of the doctrine of utility have stated that the morality of actions cannot, *in every case*, be correctly determined without a reference to general consequences, they have been most absurdly and perversely represented as maintaining that, in *all* cases, such a reference is necessary ; as if they had said that nothing can immediately and of itself appear a crime ; that an act of cruelty or injustice cannot be perceived to be wrong, but as a part of a great many such acts. It is astonishing what a deal of pains the opponents of utility have employed in struggling with this phantom of their own raising.*

It is in comparatively few cases that, to discover the character of an action, we need to look far beyond its immediate consequences. Most frequently, too, a reference to the consequences of the species or class, does not alter the kind, but the degree, of the obligation : not changing an action from good to bad, or bad to good, but making its goodness or badness appear in more correct proportions. A single and insignificant act of de-

* What, for instance, can be less to the purpose than Dr. Brown's reference to the case of a mother watching over her sick infant, as one in which no regard is had to general utility — as if this were necessarily a moral action at all, or if such mother were acting otherwise than from mere animal instinct ; or as if, though the action *did* proceed entirely from moral principle, the benefit rendered to the *infant alone*, were not, on the principle of utility, sufficient to establish the moral obligation.

ceit or dishonesty is at once perceived to be, in its absolute character, and as distinguished from an action of an opposite kind, wrong; though, looking only to the individual act, the true magnitude of the wrong does not always appear.* But even when, in cases such as this, a reference to the *species* of action is necessary, how little reflection need it require to discover what would be the consequence if deviations from truth and honesty were generally permitted? Supposing yet that degree of reflection to be wanting, how soon would experience supply the want? One would imagine a man could not much more easily pretend to have doubt or difficulty here, than he could throw off or disavow a regard to moral obligation itself: it would be just as easy to say he would not do his duty, as that he could not see it. But we are always required to suppose, in the present inquiry, that men have some wish, more or less, to do, and, therefore, of necessity, to know their duty.

* When inclined to utter a falsehood, I believe our first feeling is — (arising from a consciousness of our own aversion to being deceived) — that we are doing the person spoken to a hurt or evil; our second feeling, that, as he will never know of having been deceived, (which we may reckon upon,) he can suffer nothing — *and here ignorant persons usually stop*. The third and last, and sound determination, consequent on reflection or experience, is, that, if we may deceive another, he and every man may deceive us. This brings the just theory home to us.

Nor is there the same chance of self-delusion in the formation of moral principles, as in the practical application of them. Moral truths can, as well as mathematical truths, or the truths of any other science, be established at our leisure, when the mind is free from prejudice or passion. The application of them must often be at seasons when the mental vision is obscured or perverted. Hence men do not so often act wrong either from an erroneous moral creed, or from the open disregard of moral obligation, as from a sophistical interpretation of sound principles.

It is to be remarked, too, that to determine the morality of actions, in their various genera and species, with a strict and precise regard to the theoretical principles formerly described, is alike impossible and unnecessary. By a strange injustice, it seems to have been thought a sufficient objection against any theory of morals, an objection nevertheless equally applicable in the case of other sciences, that its theoretical rules are, in practice, such as neither are, nor can be, acted upon with absolute exactness. If it were said that the quantity of medicine to be administered in any particular disorder should be greater, as the force of the disease is greater; less, as the constitution of the patient is weaker—would any one object to this that it is impossible to compute either of those particulars; or, if it were not so, that it is impossible to graduate a grain of medicine accordingly?

— Yet many of the objections to the theory of morals under consideration, have been of a nature entirely similar to this.

With regard to the alleged quickness or promptitude of our moral determinations, about which we hear so much, I beg to be shewn a case in which an uninstructed and unreflecting person does determine promptly, where the utility (or the contrary) of the action, is not at once apparent ; or a case where, when the utility (or the contrary) of the action is not readily apparent, such a person does determine promptly. If there is no such case of either kind, if the character of utility is always to be found in those actions which the moral faculty approves, and if, conversely, the moral faculty always approves those actions in which utility is perceived, what possible reason can there be for maintaining that the action is approved otherwise than on account of its utility, or how can there be a more gratuitous and unphilosophical supposition than that which the opponents of utility are obliged to resort to of a special instinct? But it is needless to argue this point, for the fact is, that the very persons who, in opposition to the advocates of utility, plead for the existence of a faculty immediately and unerringly distinguishing right from wrong, * without any reference to views of utility—are compelled to

* See Appendix.

contradict their own statements, when, in treating of another branch of the subject, they have to deal with opponents of a different description — with those sceptical writers, namely, who have maintained morality to be something that is only local and conventional, and destitute of any fixed or unchanging principle. When pressed with examples of actions that are at one time and place reckoned good, at another time and place bad, what is the reply, and the just and proper reply, which even the opponents of utility have made? This: that though the actions were the same, it was not for the same qualities that they were at once approved and condemned; but that dissimilar apprehensions of the nature and tendencies of such actions, made them be viewed with dissimilar sentiments in each case :* that is to say, the results of the action being thought beneficial, i. e. useful, it was approved; in the contrary case, condemned. Now I ask is this consistency? If we have a moral faculty which at once discerns right from wrong, how does it come to give contradictory decisions? If it may be misled by false views of the tendencies of actions, what becomes of the arguments against the doctrine of utility, that we cannot stop, forsooth, to mind the consequences of actions?

And this leads me, in the last place, to main-

* See, upon this, Dr. Thomas Brown and Mr. Dugald Stewart.

tain, that, whether a reference to the general consequences of actions (in cases where, by the theory, it is admitted to be necessary) is difficult or not, men do, in fact, judge by such a reference (where they judge at all) or if they do not, they *judge wrong*.

It is somewhat amusing to observe the change of tactics which the opponents of utility have adopted in regard to this point. Before the theory of general consequences was fully developed, it was promptly denied that utility was the measure of moral obligation; since, in many cases, as, for instance, of lying, fraud, and impurity, where the crime was certainly great, there was little or nothing contrary to utility. No sooner was this obviated by a reference to the consequences of the species, or class of actions, than the ground was forthwith changed; and we were told — not that the general consequences were not thus highly pernicious, but — that men did not, in their practical judgments, *think* of general consequences. Now, what I should say to these arguers is this, — choose your position, and stand upon it. If you say that the rules of morality are to be taken from the primary and unassisted judgments of mankind, formed previously to reflection or observation, then I will assert that the instances of falsehood, &c. which you have produced, are *not* reckoned crimes. If, on the other hand, you adopt the judgment of those who have pronounced

such acts to be really criminal, then I will maintain that this judgment has been formed only by means of the reference in question.

In whatever degree it may happen that the character of any action cannot be fully estimated from its individual effects, and without a reference to those effects which would result from its general prevalence, in that degree the sentiments of mankind respecting it will be found to want uniformity and decision, and to depend upon the knowledge, capacity, and reflection of the individual who passes the judgment. In fact, it is exactly from a want of attention to general consequences, and a too exclusive regard to those which are merely particular, that errors in moral judgment are, almost in every instance, found to proceed. How difficult is it to convince the more ignorant classes of society of the moral guilt of smuggling, or defrauding the public revenue? and what is the constant excuse for it? — that nobody suffers by it. What is the occasion of the little condemnation that is generally passed on the illicit commerce of the sexes, but that single acts of this kind are seldom attended with visible harm to any one, or, at all events, with a degree of harm bearing any proportion to the effects of a universal promiscuous intercourse? How difficult is it to convince the ignorant and illiterate of the justice of a law which, in any particular case that comes before them, inflicts a hardship? Who is

there, indeed, that has a public duty to perform, in obedience to any prescribed rule, and cannot predict the constant argument by which he will be urged to relax the performance of it — it will do no harm? Does not the frequency of this plea, and the necessity of referring to general consequences in order to obviate and exclude it, satisfactorily shew that this doctrine is not a mere invention of the speculative inquirer, but a transcript from the practical judgments of the more reflecting and enlightened of mankind? If, when general consequences are unobserved, a crime may cease to be thought a crime, and if we must, in order to shew it to be a crime, resort to the view of its general consequences, are we still to be told that men form their moral judgments without a reference to general consequences? So they do; but, if they pass a right judgment, it is in cases where a reference to general consequences is not absolutely necessary; and, where such a reference is necessary, they pass a wrong judgment.*

* To do full justice to the present argument, it would be necessary to speak with reference to the case of men destitute of revelation, who have to make their moral rules for themselves. To hear the way in which the opponents of utility speak about the difficulties and errors men would fall into if they judged of the obligation of actions by their utility, one would suppose that *no* errors had ever occurred *in point of fact*. Do the ideas of heathen and savage nations bear out this? — If the moral faculty operates as an instinct, it should

It is undeniable that, in many cases where men perceive at once an obligation to act or not to act in a particular manner, they yet do not estimate correctly the amount of that obligation as relative to other obligations. Thus a scrupulous and universal regard to *truth* may be observed to be generated only by instruction and authority. When a lie does no harm, and where any good can be gained by it, the ignorant, in general, think it wrong not to lie. Though it may be safely owned then that there is an original visible obligation to speak truth, yet the great weight which is properly attached to that obligation is founded on a view of the consequences that would result from a general disregard of it. Let any one but remark the arguments by which the observance of truth is usually recommended, and they will always be found to turn on this consideration.

It will perhaps be said that, in such cases as now instanced, there is, or ought to be, an instantaneous perception of the obligation *not to do evil that good may come*. It is overlooked that the very question to be settled on such occasions (that is, previously to instruction or reflection) is, what, under the whole circumstances of any given case, *is* doing evil. If doing evil means the production of hurt, damage, or pain, then to give false evi-

be as perfect in a savage as in a philosopher. In their other instincts, savages are generally *not inferior*, at least, to their civilized brethren.

dence in order to save an innocent man, to defraud a rich man in order to relieve the distress of a poor man, is not doing evil that good may come ; for no evil, i. e. no hurt, damage, or pain, is felt by any one. If doing evil means doing what is morally wrong, the question is just what is wrong, and why it is so, and whether this can be at all times determined otherwise than in the way described. But is it not natural, it will be asked, for one to say at once in such cases, —it is falsehood—it is theft—no matter what good it may occasion? True ; but the terms falsehood, theft, murder, fraud, &c. obviously include in their meaning not merely the notion of certain acts, but of such acts already apprehended as morally wrong ; so that to tell us that a thing is wrong, because it is theft, or fraud, is in effect to tell us that it is wrong, because it is wrong, —leaving us still to ask, why, or how ; and the determination that an act, though in itself harmless, or even immediately answering some desirable purpose, is, nevertheless, fraud, or falsehood, or theft, and therefore must be avoided, just imports this—However great may be the good attained in this instance by the fiction, or the taking away, however trifling the evil produced, still it is falsehood, or theft ; it is morally wrong ; it is a *species* of act which produces more evil than could be counterbalanced by any good which it might produce in individual cases.

The maxim alluded to, then, though invaluable

as a practical maxim, is not an original theoretical principle in morals ; but, on the contrary, necessarily supposes the previous existence of certain specific rules — rules whose foundation we may easily discover in the principle of general utility ; and it was originally addressed, by its Divine Author, to persons who were in possession of specific rules authoritatively delivered to them.

Thus, in order to meet the objections that have been brought against the doctrine of utility, I have endeavoured to shew, first, That most of the actions instanced as those which men perform without regard to utility, are not moral actions at all, and therefore do not come within the range of the question ;—secondly, That actions may be, and are frequently performed as, obligatory, without the agent's knowing, or without his having in view, on what the obligation depends : so that his not regarding the utility does not prevent that from being the ground of the obligation ;—thirdly, That when men really do judge for themselves of the morality of actions, they judge by utility, and judge without difficulty : since, for the most part, all that is necessary to be considered is the immediate tendency of particular actions, which may of course be discovered easily and instantaneously : a reference to general consequences being requisite not so much for the foundation, as for the correction of a moral judgment :—and lastly, That in all cases where a moral judgment would, on the prin-

ciples of the theory under consideration, really involve the necessity of an extended view of consequences, such view is in fact taken, or the judgment formed without it turns out to be a *wrong* judgment.—So far as men do not act from moral principle at all, or so far as they take moral rules on trust, it cannot matter whether utility or any thing else be supposed the ground of moral obligation. So far as men do in fact judge of moral obligation—judge promptly, and judge correctly—the utility of the action is always evident at first sight. So far as it must be discovered by extensive knowledge, experience, or reflection, most men are in fact unable to judge at all, or they judge wrong, and pernicious consequences do, in fact, follow.

It is proper to point out here the strict aim of the preceding argument—which is not to urge the adoption of utility, as of a new and improved principle of moral conduct—for I hold utility to have always been the principle of moral conduct. But the argument of those who oppose that principle is this—Utility is not what men always have in view, in performing morally good actions;—if they did always act on views of utility, the consequences would be pernicious : — *therefore* utility is not the foundation of moral obligation. This argument I meet, not by contesting the premises, but the inference; by shewing, namely, that to maintain utility to be the principle of moral obli-

gation, does not suppose that men always act from a regard to moral obligation, nor with a knowledge of the theory of the obligation, in each particular case, when they do so ; by shewing, farther, that when men do, in fact, judge of the obligation of actions, we either need not suppose, reasoning *a priori*, that the dangers alleged would follow from their judging upon the principle of utility, or that, so far as, reasoning *a priori*, these dangers might be apprehended, they do exist in fact.

But there is still a way in which the truth of these conclusions may be called in question. If, as I have represented, the principle of utility is, and always has been, that from which men have deduced the rules of moral duty, how comes it, it will be asked, that this principle has been but partially, and, comparatively speaking, but lately acknowledged, — acknowledged, at most, but by a *sect* of philosophers, whose views have met with considerable, if not general opposition — some of whom too, without doubt, have deduced consequences from that doctrine, which, if they were to be acted upon, would dissolve the whole system of social order, and subvert the most established rules of moral duty ? How comes it, it may be said, that *utility*, or, which is synonymous, *expediency*, has usually been put forth as the excuse for some of the most horrid crimes ; so much so that the very term has acquired a meaning im-

plying an opposition to what is morally right? If, it will be argued, where utility has not been professed as the principle of moral conduct, there has been no considerable or systematic perversion of moral rules—if, on the contrary, where it has been professed, there has been such considerable and systematic perversion, the inference is unavoidable that utility has neither in name nor in substance ever been the actual principle from which mankind have derived their rules of conduct, and that the worst consequences would ensue were it ever to become such.

To this I would reply, in the first place, that if the term *utility* has not been in general use, as denoting the principle of moral obligation, its meaning—that meaning in which I use it—is involved in that of every term that has ever been employed to express any criterion of the morality of actions. The very name of *good* is applied indifferently to express the moral character, and the useful or hurtful effect of an action;—it is a *good* action which *does good*—which ministers to the ease or enjoyment of any one, or relieves his uneasiness or distress. *Evil* is applied to express either *morally wrong*, or hurt, damage, pain: an action is *evil* which *does evil*. Is there any pernicious action that, as pernicious, is reckoned morally right, and is not reckoned morally wrong? is there any useful action which, as useful, is reckoned morally wrong, or which is not reckoned morally right?

Has an obligation ever been held to exist to perform actions which, if any body or every body were to perform, would be of use to no one? has an obligation ever existed to abstain from actions which, if any body or every body were to perform, would be pernicious to no one? Or, looking to degree as well as to kind,—is an action that creates much pleasure or happiness, or that removes much misery or uneasiness, ever reckoned, on that account, less morally good than one that creates little happiness or removes little misery? Is it not, on that account at least, reckoned morally better, and *mutatis mutandis*?

Next, in regard to the recent and partial use of the term utility, and to the mischievous doctrines that have sometimes been promulgated by those who have specially applied that term to express the principle of moral obligation — doctrines said to be unheard of otherwise — I would remark — setting aside all mention of the errors in moral judgment that have more or less prevailed among mankind, even where the term utility was never employed — that men often judge correctly of particular cases, without being able to assign or name a general principle, into which their judgment would resolve; though, where there is a true and a false in judgment, such general principle must undoubtedly exist; and when any principle comes to be assigned, no proof that it is not the true principle, can be drawn from the

circumstance that judgments have been formed, in particular cases, without that principle's having been named. But farther, it often happens also, that when, by induction of particulars, the true general principle is arrived at, men will reason falsely downwards from that principle, in cases where, perhaps, had the principle never been named, they would have judged rightly. This I take to be precisely what has happened in regard to the principle of utility.

In tracing our moral judgments upwards to their original source, philosophers have unavoidably been led to observe, that the quality which universally pervades actions reckoned *morally good*, is this, that they, in some way or degree, tend to create happiness, or remove misery, and *vice versa*: to this quality, they have — unfortunately, I think it must be allowed — given the name of *utility*. In reasoning downwards from this principle, they have fallen into two grievous errors. First, Not sufficiently advertent to the nature and extent of our perception, that happiness ought to be promoted rather than misery; not asking themselves the question *why* or *how* utility should be promoted,—they have overlooked—what they would have observed had they really asked this question—that whatever reason exists for promoting utility *at all or in any way*, the like reason exists for distributing it in certain ways and measures rather than in other ways and measures.

Had they observed this, they would have avoided the appearance of creating an opposition between *utility* and *justice*.

Secondly, Deceived by an ambiguous meaning in the word *utility* ; not observing that the term had an absolute and general, as well as a relative and specific import ; and that it is only in its widest and most extensive meaning that it can truly be made the principle of moral obligation,—they have either been ensnared into an attempt to deduce the ordinary rules of morality from that principle in its strict, and perhaps — philologically speaking — just import ; or, failing in that attempt, have adopted the desperate measure of questioning the soundness of all received systems of morality, and substituting others, certainly very exceptionable ones, in their room. In short, reasoning upwards from particulars to generals, they have arrived at one utility ; reasoning downwards from generals to particulars, they have started from another : the intermediate transition — the transition from one sense of utility to another — escaping their notice.

But granting, to the fullest extent, that the doctrine of utility is apt to have such consequences deduced from it as are now the subject of objection, nay, that such consequences have frequently been, in fact, deduced from it, it is plain that this proves nothing against the truth of the principle. The fact that such and such inferences have fre-

quently been deduced from it, affords at most but a *presumption* that these inferences are true inferences. That they are not true, however, I find admitted even by some of the opponents of the doctrine; and it is surely not a very unexceptionable sort of logic that pronounces a principle untrue, because false reasoning from that principle leads to a false conclusion.*

To say that people who have not drawn their rules of conduct from views of utility have often been right, while those who have employed that

* When the body of those who adopt a particular *principle*, are indiscriminately charged with the absurdities and excesses of certain individuals of that body, it should be shewn that the absurdities are *inherent* in the principle; that those who deduce the absurdities, reason conclusively; that those who disclaim the absurdities, reason inconclusively, or incompletely. For my own part, I will go the length of saying, that, even if I were unable to dis sever the alleged consequences from the principle, there is no conclusion I should not rather come to, than acknowledge the principle to be erroneous; because it seems to me *a priori* to carry its own indisputable evidence. That nothing but what is, in some way or sense, of utility (that is, productive of ease, satisfaction, pleasure, happiness) can be right,—that nothing but what is contrary to utility (i. e. productive of pain, uneasiness, disappointment, misery) can be wrong, seem to me to be propositions so essentially and independently true, that no reasoning backwards from supposed absurd consequences can possibly disturb their truth. If the reasoning is right, the consequences are true; if the consequences are absurd, the reasoning is wrong; but, in either case, the principle must stand.

principle have been wrong, is just telling us that a man may do right in following the multitude without inquiry, when he would do wrong in judging from principles by himself. What should we think of any one who should deny that Christianity was founded on evidence; and who should justify this denial by reference to the fact that many who had examined these evidences were infidels, while millions who knew nothing about them were good Christians? Would this prove that the truth of Christianity does not depend upon evidence? Or if one should, on a review of these evidences, come to the conclusion that Christianity is a fable, should we, if we desired to set him right, tell him that its truth did not depend on evidence, or should we not, on the contrary, endeavour to shew that his conclusion from the evidence was a false one?

And let me ask whether, if a man were inclined to dispense with the observance of the general rules of morality, and to direct his conduct by what *utility* seemed to require in each particular case, whether any reason could be urged for the observance of such rules, shewing what they enjoined to be *right in its own nature*, other than what can be drawn from this very doctrine of utility — whether, in short, the abuse of the doctrine can be corrected in any other way than by the legitimate use of it — or whether any reason *at all* could be assigned for the observance of such

general rules, that would imply the falsity of the principle of utility.

Perhaps it would be said that the ordinary rules of morality are to be observed because they are enforced by the authority of *conscience*. But to say this, is to confound the two great subjects of inquiry in a theory of morals. The very question we are investigating is, what conscience does recommend. To say that we should perform certain actions, not because they are of utility, but because they are recommended by conscience, is much the same as to say that a court should decide a cause, not according to the evidence but according to justice ; or to say that Peruvian bark is a good medicine, not because it strengthens the body, but because it is recommended by the physicians. That we should do what conscience approves, is an identical proposition. Godwin, Hume, and Paley, would have been as ready to admit its truth as their opponents. But the parties differ as to what conscience does approve ; and the question is, what is the principle by which the difference is to be decided.

If it is said that the ordinary rules of morality ought to be followed because the observance of them is commanded by the Deity, we must inquire what are the various specific reasons why we ought to obey the will of the Deity.

Now we ought to obey the will of the Deity, either,

I. Because we perceive the obligation of his laws in their own nature, and without regard to their being commanded ; or

II. Because we assume that, being commanded by God, they are of intrinsic obligation, whether we can perceive the grounds of the obligation or not ; or

III. Because we shall be rewarded for obedience, punished for disobedience to them, whether they are in their own nature obligatory or not ; or

Lastly, Because God has been beneficent and merciful to us, and therefore we ought, in return, to do what is pleasing to him. — Are there any other reasons ?

Now whether or not the first reason is founded on utility, just resolves itself into the general inquiry. The like may be said of the second reason ; or, at all events, that it leaves the doctrine of utility untouched, and remains untouched by it. As it is certain that rules of morality promulgated by the Deity must be the sound rules of morality, the best calculated to attain the aim, whatever it may be, of moral acting, the man who believes himself bound to act upon the principle of utility, may believe himself bound to follow the divine will, as the most unerring guide in the application of that principle. You may prove to him, upon his own principle, that he ought to obey the divine law : you cannot prove it in any way that infringes his principle.

In regard to the third reason — If we ought to obey the divine commands, merely as being the divine commands, and without regard to the intrinsic obligation of the actions commanded (whether the obligation is perceived or supposed) —if we ought to obey the divine commands merely in order to obtain the rewards of obedience, and avoid the pains of disobedience, — is our obedience rendered in this case for any thing else but its utility—its utility *to ourselves*—i. e. because such conduct will procure our happiness, and prevent our misery?

Then in regard to the fourth reason — if we ought to obey the divine laws in order to please the divine Being, and this on account of his benefits bestowed on us, does not this suppose that our obedience is of utility—is pleasing or agreeable—to the divine Being? But, it will be asked, can any thing we are able to do, really affect, even in the smallest degree, the happiness of the Deity? —No matter whether it can or cannot : we think it can, or we fancy or imagine it can : our language implies as much ; or what should we mean by *pleasing* the Deity. Did we not think, or fancy, that our obedience is *agreeable*, our disobedience *disagreeable*, we should never have the notion of being *bound or obliged in gratitude, as distinct from every other reason*, to obey the Deity.*

* I am unable to see any reason why we must consider the Deity as incapable of receiving any satisfaction from the grati-

But I would ask, in the next place, is any system of moral rules sufficient, without the use of a general principle, to exclude at all times the exercise of individual judgment, even on the merits of particular cases? do the ordinary rules of morality, as laid down in scripture, or in the works of ethical writers, furnish sufficient directions for

tude and obedience of his creatures. It seems to me that, in our eagerness to remove the Deity from all likeness to the human nature, we sometimes remove him from what is essentially involved in any notion we can possibly form of a living intelligent being. It is one thing to say that nothing which our gratitude could prompt us to do could be of any service to the Deity: it is another to say that this gratitude itself can be no more pleasing than what its contrary would be. With the approveableness of piety as a *disposition*, we have here nothing to do. But to say that we ought, as a matter of *obligation*, to obey the Deity, irrespectively of any good thereby produced to the Deity, to ourselves, to the human race, to any living being, merely because He is "our Creator, Governor, and Benefactor," (Price) is to maintain a proposition to be true, abstractedly from all that is implied in that proposition. It is as if one should say that we ought to take our food, neither because it removes our hunger, nor because it preserves our health and our existence, but because it is the *intention of nature*. — That God is my creator, is no reason why I should obey his will, unless as implying that he knows best what is good for me and my fellow-creatures. That God is my governor, is no reason why I should obey his will, unless as implying that he can reward or punish me. That God is my benefactor, is no reason why I should obey his will, unless as implying that my obedience will be pleasing to him, my disobedience displeasing to him.

conduct, without any care or investigation on the part of the agent? is there no such thing as instructing the conscience, or are there, in scripture, or in systems of morality, in natural or in civil law, directions for every case of conduct? are there even clear and indisputable analogies to which every case may, without doubt or difficulty, be referred? On the contrary, are not the precepts both of the divine law and of human morality in a great measure general — often containing little more in effect than the inculcation of this very doctrine of utility—commanding us to do what is good, beneficial; to avoid doing what is evil, hurtful, injurious; and leaving us, after all, to discern what is thus beneficial?

But finally, and to complete the argument, — Does not the objection itself which I have now been attempting to obviate, that, namely, which argues against the doctrine of utility from the mischievous consequences that would ensue if men were to form their conduct on views of utility — does not this objection just *assume the very principle it is employed to subvert*? What is the meaning of mischievous, or pernicious, or lamentable, or dreadful consequences, but just that these are the contrary, or reverse of *utility*? and what would the argument amount to, if merely stated in a different form, but simply this, — that utility cannot be the foundation of moral duty, because, if men were to act from a regard to utility, the

effects would be, *not* effects of utility, but the reverse? Is not this making utility, after all, the criterion? is it not saying that *if* utility would really be promoted by men's acting with a view to utility, then such acting would be right; but that, as their acting with this view would *not* promote utility, *therefore* — what? utility is not the *end*? nay; but men's directly pursuing it is not the *means*. Is not this distinctly recognising the principle, but discarding a certain application of it?

Granting then all that the opponents of utility contend for on this head, what is the inference? Simply this—that, although it is always true that an action producing beneficial effects is obligatory, yet this, viz. “an action producing beneficial effects”—is not always the *specification* of an action, which, being enjoined on human agents, would produce beneficial effects. Now it is not the specification of moral duty that the advocates of utility argue concerning, but — let the specification be what it will—the *principle* of that specification.

It is right for a patient in a fever to act so as to cure it; yet to give him this injunction — “Cure the fever” — may not be a specification of the action, the performance of which, according to the agent's own judgment and application of its meaning, would produce the desired effect. The specification of duty would be, to take the advice of a physician. It is right for a soldier to act so as to

conquer the enemy; yet—"to conquer the enemy"—is not the specification of the action by which this may be accomplished, but, to obey his officers. But though obedience to the physician, in the one case, and to the military commander, in the other, is the specification of the action proper to be performed, does the propriety of the action so specified consist in any thing else than that it is calculated to effect the conquest of the enemy, in the one case, the cure of the disease, in the other?

A certain action appears to me to be of utility—ought I not then to perform it?—allowing that I ought not, does it follow that the doctrine of utility is false? First let me ask *why* I may not perform it? Because it is contrary to what the natural affections of the heart—the indications of the divine will—contrary to what conscience itself—the vicegerent of the Deity within us—recommends; contrary even to the divine commands, authoritatively expressed.—All this may be true: but all this may prove, not that I ought not always to perform an action that is of utility, but that the particular action which I meditate is really *not* of utility. Would it have been forbidden by any moral rule had it been of utility? Would any impulse or affection have been given in opposition to it had it been of utility? Would conscience (supposed an instinctive power) have been made to condemn it had it been of utility? Would

the Deity have interdicted it had it been of utility? — Or *why ought I* to observe the rules of morality? why ought I to follow my natural affections? why ought I to do what is agreeable to my conscience? why ought I to obey the Deity? — Is it for any other reason than the utility of my doing so? the utility, in general, of men's so acting; the utility, in particular, of my so acting; or the utility to myself, the promotion of my happiness, the prevention of my misery, in this world or the next? — When any of these positions can be contradicted, I shall be ready to abandon the principle for which I have been arguing.

With the question, why I *do*, or why I *might* perform the action, that is, what is, or might be, my *actual motive*, we have here nothing whatever to do. I may perform it from hope, from fear, from gratitude, from natural instinct or affection, from any motive you like. Our only question is why I *ought* to do it? If I do it on my own judgment that it is in its own nature right, the question is, — upon what principle do I judge it right? if I do it from submission to a rule or an impulse furnished by another being, — upon what principle did that being (in this case the *agent*) judge it right to give such rule or such impulse? if I do it to obtain reward, avoid punishment, — upon what principle did the being (still the moral agent) who proposed the reward or punishment, think it right to present these inducements? upon

what principle do I (again, in this instance, the moral agent) think it right to follow them ?

Thus in all questions regarding the principle of moral acting, we must entirely confine our attention to the case of a being acting solely and strictly from moral principle ; and in cases where man and the Deity, or man and his earthly superior or instructors, act in their mutual relations, we must consider how far and in what respect, each being acts as a moral agent. It is not in the mind of the being who acts under an impulse or direction given him that we are to seek the foundation of the morality of an action ; any more than the reason of cultivating a field can be found in the mind of the animal that draws the plough.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew, in this and the preceding chapter, that *utility*, in a more or less extended meaning of the term, is the source of all our moral notions ; and that however a regard to utility may be mixed up with, or even superseded by, other principles of conduct, however it may be lost sight of in the mechanical observance of moral rules, originally, it may be, received upon authority, and retained from habit, it is the *utility*, real or apparent, of an action, and that alone, that can ever produce, in the mind of an agent, the perception of its being *morally obligatory*.

But while I thus defend the principle of utility, as constituting the foundation of all the moral qua-

lities of actions, I trust that, by the limitations under which I have thus defended it, I have effectually guarded against the dangers which the recognition of this principle has generally been supposed to create. The maintenance of this doctrine, as I have maintained it, does not suppose that we are to regulate our conduct exclusively by views of self-interest, however comprehensive, however enlightened ; does not suppose that in seeking to confer on mankind the indispensable necessities, or the more tangible and solid goods of life, we must needs neglect their feelings, their tastes, their natural wishes, or even their harmless prejudices ; does not suppose that the promotion of the good of all can ever require the sacrifice of the rights of individuals — can ever require the suppression of the natural affections, or the abandonment of the private and social duties of life ; does not suppose that a man is to set himself loose from the authority of instructors, guides, and superiors, or from the obligation of the known and approved rules of morality : — above all, does not suppose that he is to reckon himself a better judge of what is of utility to mankind, than the Being who made mankind, and made him ; or that, with the imperfect knowledge, the selfish dispositions, and the narrow means of humanity, he is to run counter to the ordinances of perfect wisdom, unbounded benevolence, and almighty power.

APPENDIX.

*On the supposed Opposition between the Doctrine of Utility
and that of a Moral Sense.*

It is singular how any opposition has ever been imagined to exist between the supposition of our having a special inward *sense*, discriminative of right and wrong; and that of the moral goodness of actions consisting in their *utility*. It might just as well be said, that to assert that the stomach and not the lungs digests our food, contradicts the position that one particular chemical substance, and not another, is the essence of nutritive food; yet as the confusion now alluded to has not been avoided either by the supporters of utility or their opponents, it is desirable to see under what view of the matter it has occurred.

The division generally given of the chief branches of inquiry in a theory of morals, (namely, the two questions—*by* what *faculty* do we perceive actions to be good or bad?—*for* what *quality* in these actions does our moral faculty determine them to be good or bad?) proceeds on the supposition, that a certain quality is first perceived to reside in some actions, by the use of those faculties which we ordinarily employ in determining matters of fact, and perceived previously to the exercise of the *moral* faculty — (if *reason* is conceived to be the moral faculty, — previously to the exercise of

reason *as* the moral faculty, and as making a purely moral judgment:—that, for instance, supposing *utility* to be the quality, we first perceive that one action is useful, another not, without the moral faculty; and then that the moral faculty, on its proper object, *utility*, being presented to it, determines the action possessing that quality to be *right*. Now though the general division above alluded to, with the understanding of what I have stated it to imply, seems to have been universally acquiesced in by moral theorists, some of them have incidentally expressed themselves to a quite different purpose. They have spoken as if we did not perceive an action to be right, *because* of its possessing another quality, such as utility; but as if its being *right* was itself perceived to be an original quality not dependent on any other. An action, they might be understood to say, is no more perceived to be *right* on account of some other quality previously ascertained, than sugar is perceived to be sweet, on account of some other quality previously ascertained.—It is obvious that this view would altogether displace, not merely the theory of *utility*, but the possibility of, or occasion for any theory at all upon this division of the subject—since this division of the subject is itself cut off by it. For though we might still suppose there was some common quality in actions felt to be *good*, in the same way as we may suppose that there is some common quality in substances

felt to be *sweet*, it could not be said, in the one case more than in the other, that we determined actions to be good, or substances sweet, *on account* of their possessing such common quality.—That this view however cannot for a moment be allowed, is evident from this, that, if it were just, there could be no more dispute whether an action was right or wrong, than whether any substance was sweet or bitter; nor could we any more convince a man that his judgment of the morality of an action was false, by shewing him that its tendency was quite different from what he supposed, than we could convince him that a substance which he has tasted was bitter and not sweet, by proving that it was a different substance from what he took it for. It is needless to enlarge upon this point, as I have already shewn that even those authors who have incidentally given into the view now alluded to, are obliged to admit that a previous determination of the tendency of an action is absolutely necessary in order to let the moral faculty —be that faculty what it will — determine the moral character of the action.

The peculiar view of the nature of our moral perceptions just described, seems to have its origin in the signification popularly attached to the term *conscience*.

The term conscience, in its ordinary use, is applied to the moral faculty, not conceived as determining between right and wrong in the abstract,

or as pronouncing on the character or conduct of others, but as passing sentence upon a man's own actions, past or intended. And as the feeling of pleasure or pain, which must attend on the performance of good or bad actions, must be the most lasting, and, to the individual himself, as bearing on his comfort and happiness, the most important part of all that takes place in his mind on such occasions, this feeling, taking the name of conscience, is said to *indicate* the moral character of the action. It is an extreme mistake, however, to suppose that the easy or uneasy state of conscience discriminates a right from a wrong action, irrespectively of the view taken by the agent of its nature and tendency. Conscience is not a blind instinct. A man does not discriminate a right from a wrong action, without consideration of its effects, as a butterfly discriminates the proper sort of leaf on which to deposit its eggs, without regard to its being fitted for the support of the young worm; or as the bee constructs her cells without a knowledge of the mathematical principle by which the perfection of that construction (as respects strength, stowage, and economy of materials,) has been demonstrated by mathematicians. No butterfly mistakes the leaf on which to deposit its eggs; no bee mistakes the true form of its cells. Many a man mistakes right for wrong, and conversely. Now a man's conscience, as denoting his *ease or pain of mind*, will just as

heartily applaud the most detestable wickedness, as the most transcendent virtue. One man's conscience applauds what another's condemns: the same man's conscience applauds him to-day, for what it will condemn him to-morrow. Surely there is such a thing as a man's mistaking right for wrong? But his conscience, in the sense given, always applauds him for doing what he, at any given moment, *thinks* right; always condemns him for doing what he, at any given moment, thinks wrong.

It is no exception from the truth of this remark that a man cannot always make himself easy in following a course which he persuades himself to be right. The truth is here, not that his perception of the nature of the action is one way, his feeling another, but that he is trying to deceive himself, and without complete success, into a perception different from his real perception. The easiness or uneasiness of conscience attends the real perception, whether right or wrong; and hence, as the real perception ought to be a man's guide in such cases, there is both meaning and propriety in the practical direction furnished by moralists—always to follow the *impulse* of conscience, and to beware of endeavouring to stifle that impulse by the exercise of intellectual ingenuity. But to suppose the very possibility of stifling the conscience, by an intellectual process of reasoning, would be absurd, did not the sentence of conscience pass upon some

previous verdict which intellectual ingenuity might misrepresent. Were it otherwise, a man could no more stifle his conscience by reasoning, than he could stop his eye-sight by reasoning. Indeed, to stifle, to deaden, to enfeeble the power of conscience, does not, in general, so properly mean, to impair the faculty of discriminating right from wrong as to weaken the influence of moral obligation as a motive; to blunt the feelings of pleasure or pain experienced on the performance of good or bad actions respectively. A man who has a very imperfect discrimination of right and wrong, may have a very tender conscience, and *vice versa*, —unless indeed so far as the possession of a tender conscience induces, or ought to induce a man to seek to acquire a perfect knowledge of his duty.

But it may be said that even in cases where there is no self-deceit, and where a man really and sincerely, but erroneously, believes that he is performing some right action, conscience will sometimes assert its supremacy, and makes him *feel* that he is doing wrong; as, for instance, when a man, from a motive of ill-directed religious zeal, commits an act of unnatural cruelty. — If, as is here supposed, there is no self-deception in the case, I must deny that a man feels any remorse of conscience, properly so called. A man who falsely imagines himself bound to sacrifice a parent, a child, a brother, a friend, at the call of religious duty, may feel poignant distress and agony in perform-

ing such an act; but this distress, this agony is not the work of *conscience*; for if it could be so designated, then it would undoubtedly be true that there are frequent occasions on which we ought *not* to be swayed by conscience — to say which is absurd. The distress felt in such a case arises purely from the violence done to some *natural affection*; a violence, however, which we are often called upon by duty to inflict. The parent will sometimes feel the keenest anguish in crossing or chastising his child; the judge in condemning the criminal; the executive magistrate in putting the sentence into effect. It is obvious that the pain of mind felt in such cases is quite distinct from remorse or self-accusation. The natural affections do, for the most part, indicate the line of duty; but it is undeniable that they sometimes cross it.

In no case, then, does the *feeling* of conscience, properly so reckoned, *indicate* the moral character of an action, after the manner of an instinct. Before conscience can pronounce her sentence, the action must not only be conceived as an action, but as an action of a certain tendency or effect. It is enough to the butterfly, in choosing the leaf on which to deposit its eggs, that it is the leaf of a cabbage, and not that of a turnip, or a lettuce; it is chosen by the smell, by the taste, by the shape, by whatever it may be—but not chosen, so far as we can see, for its aptitude to nourish the future worm. On the contrary, if conscience ap-

proves of giving food and raiment to a destitute person, disapproves of cutting his flesh with a knife, or putting out his eyes, it is not on the bare conception of these actions, as they are severally distinguished from one another, and from other actions, but on the conception of them as occasioning *pleasure* in the one case, *pain* in the other; and whenever the action itself and its effects are closely allied in our conception, as most frequently happens, the sentence of conscience is instant; according as the action and its effects may be disjoined in our conception, conscience may suspend, or altogether withhold her sentence.

It is almost unnecessary to repeat here, that these remarks have no regard whatever to the question between the intellectual and sentimental hypotheses — having equal truth and equal occasion, whichever of these theories we adopt. Even the sentimental hypothesis must require us to suppose that a certain character is, as a matter of fact, perceived to belong to the action, before the emotion, supposed to be distinctive of its moral quality, can take place. Between the perception of the character of the action, as matter of fact, and the emotion (where there is emotion) the intellectual theory supposes a judgment of the understanding; but on neither hypothesis can the *action*, barely conceived as such, and independently of its *effects*, be distinguished as right or wrong, (in the sense of obligatory) either by an intellectual or an emotive process.

PART V.

OF THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF EXCELLENCE IN A LIVING BEING.

CHAPTER I.

OF OTHER BESIDES *MORAL* QUALITIES WHICH ENTER INTO THE CHARACTER OF GENERAL EXCELLENCE.

SECT. I.

Of the Essential Object of Regard in Qualities not Moral.

It is very clear that there are other qualities belonging to living beings, or circumstances in which they are placed, which are the causes of our entertaining a value for them, besides moral virtue ; qualities which, as well as moral virtue, we denominate excellences, the possession of which we reckon as conferring superiority ; and which we view with certain sentiments, individually distinguished indeed from moral approbation, but having a plain specific likeness to it. Such qualities

are wisdom, genius, knowledge, personal strength and beauty, and others similar.

It falls then to be inquired, in what else, besides moral virtue, does the excellency of a living being consist? what distinguishes other qualities besides virtue and vice as good and bad? what other sentiments than those of moral approbation and disapprobation do the different natures or qualities of living beings excite? This seems to me to be an almost uncultivated part of moral philosophy, and the degree of attention which I have been able to bestow upon it, is far from being proportionate to its interest and importance.

It appears to me, however, first, that the primary and essential object of all value distinct from that which we attach to moral goodness, is *power*; that the primary and essential object of contempt is impotence, inability, or subjection to power: and secondly, that from our necessarily viewing power as an object of essential value, we come to form the notion of a certain *character* or *disposition* in a rational being, as relative to this object, — namely, according as he aspires to the possession of power and the consideration attending it, on the one hand, or willingly surrenders or submits to power, and the contempt attending that submission, on the other. To this character, in the one case, we give the name of *spirit*, elevation of mind; — in the other, of *meanness*. — These positions I now proceed to illustrate.

The notion of *power* is too simple and elementary to be defined. No notion, however, can be more familiar; nor will any thing appear plainer, on consideration, than that power, in our very conception of it, is what must excite respect and attention; and that impotence, or inability of any kind, must be viewed with neglect and contempt.

Bodily strength and activity—or power of motion and material impulse; strength of mind—or power to comprehend, to penetrate, to reason, to discern, to recollect; knowledge—which is the power of beholding what is the truth or fact of any thing; ingenuity, invention, imagination,—which are so many powers of discovering and combining different elements for some desired result; mechanical dexterity, skill in the arts, power to play on an instrument, to paint a picture, to form a statue; power to heal a disease, to compose a poem, or a piece of music,—all these are qualities and accomplishments which we value a person for possessing; and each is valued under the notion of a power, ability, or faculty,—something that he can do, or is able to do, and which others cannot do, or are not able to do; and those others who thus cannot—are unable—have not *power*—we accordingly look upon with neglect and disregard. Such feelings are entertained towards a man who is blind, deaf, dumb, or lame; who wants a limb, or an eye, or labours under any general or local infirmity: he cannot—he has

not power — he is unable — to see, to hear, to walk, to raise a weight;—he wants some organ or instrument of *power*. Another is unable — has not power — to comprehend, to recollect, to judge any matter; to invent means to an end, to draw an inference, and the like. — This is *want* of power.

The *opposite* of power is dependence upon, or subjection to, other power—which, still more than the mere want of power, renders any being despicable. — To be compelled to do what we would not — whether by direct visible agency or otherwise,—to be bound, confined, or shifted about, at the pleasure of another, — to be forced to weep, or to cry out for pain, — to have our features distorted, or our limbs convulsed, — all these exhibit us as feeble and powerless, and it fills us with mortification to have such feebleness discovered. To be forced by absolute bodily violence is, most of all, felt to be humiliating, because excluding all idea of willingness and consent.

A man who is subject to his own passions and humours is, to all intents and purposes, subject to other power than his own will; for he is often compelled by those passions and humours to do that which is most against his will, or against his deliberate resolution and purpose. In this instance, however, the contempt, great in reality, that we feel for this sort of weakness, would be greater, but for the appearance of acting from

free will, of which it is impossible entirely to divest it.

A particular consideration of the manner in which power is estimated will serve to illustrate the general position now maintained.

I. Power is estimated with reference to the wishes or volitions of the agent. A being *has* power, who can do what he wishes or wills to do; he has *not* power in the contrary case; and we regard or despise him accordingly. Hence it is that we are always anxious to conceal an ungratified desire, and would avoid appearing to attempt, what we cannot accomplish. This disposition, being proverbial, requires no illustration.

Even the performance of any action uselessly or in vain, merely from the failure of something else upon which we had calculated, and with which it was meant to correspond, is a betrayal of a sort of weakness, — a frustrated attempt, — which we feel an awkwardness in displaying. Such is the case when we have been speaking to a person who has unobservedly left the room or fallen asleep; when our salutation to an acquaintance in the street passes unnoticed, and the like. In general, every ludicrous or ridiculous situation suggests the idea of some want of power, and is therefore what we avoid being caught in.

To exhibit indifference and good humour under any disappointment or in any laughable predicament, lessens the notion of our weakness in the

mind of the beholder in two ways ; first, by the actual power which we display in standing proof against the mortification, and, secondly, by the appearance we assume of not being subjected, after all, to any thing that our power would have been much exerted to avoid. A man who joins in the laugh against himself, discovers, in effect, that his situation, as furnishing him with amusement, is one from which he has not cared much to escape. The indifference which he opposes to the derision of the by-standers neutralizes any feeling of contempt which they may have begun to experience ; and his good-natured sympathy with their mirth, and forgiveness of the slight it implies, never fails to excite their attachment, and to move in them a cordial desire to make him, in the end, easy and satisfied with himself.

The mere want of *power*, however, to fulfil an attempt, is not that alone which excites those feelings in the spectator of which we dislike being the object. The false judgment which we form of our own ability is a species of infirmity ; and the self-partiality it betrays, is allied, in a manner elsewhere signified, to a disposition morally unamiable.

When a man fails in any attempt, the success of which would have greatly distinguished him above others, the feeling of contempt which naturally falls upon weakness thus discovered, and discovered, it may be, only by the unsuccessful trial,

is rendered more keen and lively by the joy they experience at beholding his unjust pretensions checked : for unjust it appears to them that he should aspire to that of which they may not, professedly at least, have presumed themselves to be capable. The knowledge that his disappointment will be denied that sympathy which, in other cases, is not always withheld, nay, that it will be viewed with triumph and satisfaction, exasperates, to an almost intolerable degree, the mortification which the loss of the wished-for prize creates ; and many men, from an extreme sensitiveness to this species of disgrace, are deterred from the pursuit of aims which they feel themselves, and perhaps really are, capable of accomplishing. A backwardness which thus originates in pride, is often attributed to modesty : perhaps the two have a strong affinity : at least if the distinction drawn between pride and vanity is just (and just it seems to be) it will be allowed that modesty more naturally associates itself with the former, and arrogance with the latter.

II. Power is estimated with reference to the magnitude, the extent, the desirableness of the *effects* it can produce ; and powers of different kinds have a relative value accordingly.

Power over the passions and emotions of our own minds is valuable no less from the amount of effect produced and opposition subdued — and how great this is the rarity of such a power shews

—than for its singular usefulness to the possessor, in the tranquillity and composure it affords to himself, and the ease and security it causes to be felt by all round him.

A sound judgment is a power of discovering the truth, in speculative or practical matters. It leads to the gratification of curiosity on the one hand ; it directs how to secure the comforts, the enjoyments of life—whatever its possessor desires—on the other. Nothing is more truly and emphatically *power*. A talent for music, for poetry ; wit, humour, eloquence, — are so many *powers* of creating enjoyment to ourselves and others ; and the more exquisite the enjoyment, the more valuable the power, the more esteemed the possessor of that power.*

* In this particular exemplification of the mode in which *power* is estimated, the doctrine here maintained will correspond, in effect, with the general proposition so loosely employed by Hume, as explaining wherein the whole value of any quality, natural or moral, consists, namely, that good qualities are those which are agreeable or useful to ourselves or others, bad qualities the reverse ; for what he has called agreeable or useful qualities, would just be what I have, in this instance, called *powers* to produce any desirable or valuable effect. What I think ought to be observed, however, is, that it is not the agreeableness of the *effect*, but the *power* of the agent to produce it, that is the object present to our minds, when we value or esteem the *agent* for the possession of the agreeable or useful qualities. The agreeableness or utility of the quality seems only a sort of measure of the value of the power : certainly it is not under the notion of obtaining or communi-

With the sentiment of *consideration* which we bear towards the possessor of any agreeable power, we must avoid confounding the peculiar *emotion of pleasure* in the excitation of which the power consists. This distinction is extremely necessary to be observed, because when the question is asked, why we admire personal beauty, wit, humour, and other such qualities, — it may mean either, what is the cause of the *pleasure* we derive from the display of those qualities, or, why do we reckon those qualities good qualities, or the possessor of them *superior* to one who does not possess them. The foregoing remarks have an exclusive application to the latter question. Why we receive a pleasure from beholding a beautiful countenance, from hearing a flash of wit, or a stroke of humour, are points I am nowise concerned in determining; and when I say that the *power* of exciting these pleasures, is that which we

cating mere *enjoyment* that we desire power and influence in general, or bodily strength, genius, knowledge, and the like, in particular; nor is the respect with which we view them at all regulated by the amount of happiness they appear to confer on the possessor or others; on the contrary, they are what we very often sacrifice enjoyment, both our own, and that of others, for the sake of obtaining. No doubt the possession and consciousness of power, without reference to the ends which it may subserve, is itself a high enjoyment. But query — whether this enjoyment (like that which the virtuous man derives from the consciousness of virtue) is not rather the effect than the cause of power's being esteemed an *excellence*?

esteem a person for possessing, I do not explain the cause of the pleasure, but merely presuppose it as the fact, and, as such, furnishing us with the notion of the *power*.

The consideration we bear to the possessor of the power, and the pleasure we derive from the display of it, are apt to combine together in a manner very difficult to be separated.

A distinction must be taken, in like manner, between our respect for the possessor of power, and our fear of that power, lest it may be exercised to our own hurt or destruction. The combination of these sentiments, with perhaps a mixture of *surprise*, forms the emotion properly called *awe*.

This emotion of surprise has a very important effect in qualifying and heightening all the affections which the attributes of other beings excite in us.

The degree of any quality is merely something relative. When we say, therefore, that a Being possesses much of any quality, we merely understand,—more than is usual; and being more than is usual, it excites a proportionate degree of surprise. The sentiments, then, both of approbation and consideration, are generally accompanied with a greater or less mixture of surprise; thus constituting the compound emotion which is properly called *admiration*.

In its more limited and proper meaning, *power*

always carries a reference to the particular volitions of an agent: his *power* is a power of doing something that he wills, and when he wills it. Both the notion, however, and the term, are, in more extensive meaning, attached to that in the nature of any agent, or even inanimate body, which is the *cause* of any positive *effect*. Thus a man has the power to feel, to hear, without the intervention of his will, nay, sometimes contrary to his will. Fire has the power of melting wax, and of hardening clay.

Voluntary power, as being more really power, is more valued than involuntary.

A power, however, of effecting that which is desirable or agreeable, even without voluntary purpose, will always seem a power of doing what the agent would desire to do. A being who possesses external beauty—which is the power of exciting an agreeable emotion in the beholder,—or taste—which is the power of deriving pleasure from certain sights, sounds, conceptions—is valued for even his involuntary ability to communicate or to experience such pleasures. But even a capacity of suffering bodily pain, is a *power*, and, taken as opposed to inanimation and insensibility, we should think less of a being who wanted such a capacity. Yet in so far as a being is liable to pain, he is subject to something contrary to his will; subject to a certain species of power exercised over him; there is something which he can-

not, he is unable to help,—and this is an infirmity, a weakness. A being who had the capacity of feeling pain, but subject to his voluntary exercise, we should think superior both to one who wanted that capacity, and the one who, possessing it, could not at pleasure suspend it.

Ugliness or deformity is a power of exciting a disagreeable emotion in the mind of the beholder; and could this power be used at the pleasure of the possessor, it might procure consideration such as the possession of any other offensive weapon does; but it is in fact felt to be a subjection to other power, in so far as the person endowed with it is compelled to produce an effect very contrary to his will, an effect which he cannot, or has not power to help; and this inability, this unwilling subjection, excites in us a species of contempt.

Of all the different species of powers, however, that which is esteemed the most excellent and desirable, and excites the profoundest feelings of respect and consideration, that in short to which the term *power* is, in common language, more specifically confined, is, *power over other living beings*.

Whatever other powers of any kind a being possesses, they are fitted, in their nature, to excite the *regard* of other beings, — which is in fact a new and distinct *power* superadded to the original one; valuable in itself and for its own uses; valuable as the indication of those primary powers on which it has been founded. But power of

any kind over living beings is, according to our natural mode of estimating power, the highest and most distinguished that can exist ; because it is power *over power*, — power that can overcome active opposition, and convert to its own purposes the very energies that might be used for resistance. To have power over another being, is, in effect, to transfer his power to ourselves ; it is to create an accumulation of power, capable of multiplication without limit.

The most obvious and direct species of power which one man exhibits over another, is that which consists in bodily strength. This is accordingly the primary distinction among rude nations. The great warrior — the “mighty hunter” — he who can overcome both his fellow-men and the more powerful of the lower animals, seems to attain the highest rank of excellence ; and hence it is, too, that so great a degree of glory has at all times been attached to military prowess, which is either the exercise of physical force, or the command and skilful direction of it.

Next to physical force — superior to it, in those stages of advancement where the employment of physical force, as implying a want of higher power or of subordinate instruments, is rather reckoned degrading than otherwise — is the power of influencing the minds of men by reasoning and eloquence. And it is the successful orator who

has most generally disputed the prize of superiority with the victorious general.

The more intense the feelings of consideration and regard with which we are viewed by any living being, the more such regard approximates the ardour, the dependence, the submissiveness of devotion,—the greater is the power we display as regards that being. Hence no species of power is more ardently coveted than *power over the affections of the other sex*—no species of power of which the entire want is felt more keenly mortifying. The affection of sex, concentrated on a particular object, exceeds so much in liveliness and intensity any other feeling of regard which one human being can experience towards another, that the power of exciting such affection is necessarily viewed as a power of the highest order. The ulterior advantages of such a power, as well as the magnitude of its immediate effects, are such as must farther enhance its value in a very material degree. And when we consider, moreover, that an attempt to gain the affections of a person of the opposite sex is generally one involving rivalry and competition—(for the man or woman who has but one admirer will be but faintly admired by that one)—that success elevates the victor above all who are engaged in the same pursuit; that his failure will be, in their eyes, the failure of an unworthy attempt to depress and disappoint them, and which therefore will be visited with their tri-

umphant contempt,—when we attend to these considerations, we shall not be far from comprehending the nature of the eclat, which, in the apprehension of the lover and of others, crowns his victory, and the disgrace which follows his defeat.*

Every species of power which one being has over another, raises the one, and depresses the other, in our estimation. — A man of low station and breeding, introduced into the presence of a superior, will tremble and be abashed before him, and exhibit entire *awkwardness* and want of self-possession. We admire that power by which the one, without effort, and by the mere preservation of his own calm dignity, can thus overwhelm the other with confusion ; and proportionally despise that other who is thus capable of being dissolved into helpless weakness without even the semblance of an adequate cause.

* It arises from the regard attached to *power*, too, that the loss of chastity in a female, is reckoned of so much more disgrace than in a male. In a moral point of view, the parties are nearly on the same footing : both also evince *infirmity* in yielding to passion at the expense of obligation. But the difference is this :—The male is the attacking, the female the defending party ; and though the crime is the same, the infirmity of moral purpose the same, yet, as regards the *relative* situation of the parties, there is *power*, displayed in success, on the one side ; *weakness*, displayed in defeat, on the other.

In some peculiar situations, and under an extreme corruption of morals, an altered state of relations changes the estimation of female chastity. In the old French court, the woman

Agreeably to principles already stated, a person who, in such a situation, gives way with a good grace—if grace it can be called—to his impressions; and makes no attempt to hide his embarrassment, is less despised than the would-be man of ease and self-possession, who, with a sort of sheepish assurance, strives hard to appear unmoved. To the original weakness, he adds that of inability to bear the mortification it occasions, and of an impotent attempt to escape from it.

The ease and composure, without effort or overdoing, displayed by persons of rank and breeding in every circumstance and situation, is almost the only particular in which they are able to maintain an effectual and permanent distinction from persons of a lower degree. In every thing besides, in equipage, in dress, in arbitrary etiquette, in luxury, frivolity, and vice, or in whatever else the great have been accustomed to seek for a peculiar distinction, they are exposed to a successful competition on the part of their inferiors.

Power over our own passions has a value resembling that of power over other living beings, in so far as it is power overcoming active resistance. It has also this peculiar excellence, that the object on which it is exercised is, so to speak, an enemy within the garrison, who has every possible

who could (so to speak) procure her seduction by the monarch, was considered as attaining a high triumph and distinction.

opportunity and advantage of attack, and against whom our external defences are without avail.

In every possible view, then, it appears that our notion of *power* is that of an excellence, the proper and natural object of a sentiment which we call *consideration* or respect; that weakness, impotence, subjection to power, is what appears to depress and sink the condition of any being, and is naturally attended with neglect and contempt.

SECT. II.

Of Affections in regard to Relative Superiority and Inferiority.

When we have thus, as described in the preceding section, formed the notion of something as of what constitutes an excellence in a living being, and entitles him to consideration, on the one hand; and of something as of what is the opposite of that excellence, and causes him to be overlooked and despised, on the other,—we necessarily come to conceive of two different species of *character* that may belong to any being, according as he either voluntarily aims at the possession of such excellence, and the estimation attending it, or voluntarily yields or renounces it, and submits, in consequence, to contempt.

We ascribe a certain elevation, dignity, nobleness of mind, to a man who is intent on the attainment of whatever confers superiority, and is always willing, for that end, to make a sacrifice of

mere ease and enjoyment — a man who seeks to perfect his powers of judging and reasoning, of speech and eloquence ; to refine his taste, to increase his knowledge, to acquire skill in the elegant and practical arts ; nay, to improve his bodily faculties and corporeal strength, to gain the ability of bearing cold, hunger, fatigue, and watching ; to learn to ride, to run, to wrestle, to dance, to perform all his motions with gracefulness and ease. On the contrary, we say he is a man of a low, grovelling mind, who aims at none of these excellences, but consumes his life in indolent rest, and in the pursuit of gratification, for its own sake, and as an ultimate end.

But while we thus ascribe a character of elevation and dignity to a being who is intent on the attainment of those powers generally, the possession of which constitutes his natural excellence, and stamp the opposite character as low and degraded, we have some terms of a more specific kind to express how the disposition of any being stands in regard to the possession of *power over other beings*, on the one hand, or of *subjection to their power*, on the other. Power over living agents is, as has been said, power in its most proper sense : dependence upon, or subjection to the power of others, is not merely the negation, but the reverse of power. It might be expected, then, that dispositions differing in the manner now signified would be characterized by more definite

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and appropriate terms, and that they would excite sentiments of a more vivid and animated kind.

The term *ambition* seems properly applicable to the desire of positive power over other beings of our species, and of obtaining increased degrees of their respect and consideration.

We use the term *meanness*, to denote the disposition of a man who willingly or not unwillingly submits to the power of others, and exposes himself to their contempt and disregard; who allows the degree of consideration of which he is, at any time, possessed, to be withdrawn or lessened, or neglects to secure that degree of it which is within his reach.

Spirit is the reverse of meanness, but differs from ambition in this, that it only seeks to maintain its own place and avoid subjection to other power, whereas ambition seeks to rise and to obtain power.

An ambitious man often wants spirit. He will cringe to one that he may raise himself above others, and submit to indignity now, that he may exercise tyranny afterwards.

A man of spirit will rather remain in a low situation than fawn on his superiors in order to be promoted. Independence is his aim, not superiority.

Whoever accepts a favour, admits his dependence for the present, and becomes bound for something, or subjects himself, in some degree, to

the will of another, for the future. A man of spirit, therefore, unwillingly accepts a favour, or, if he does, is anxious to requite it, and relieve himself from the bondage which it imposes. Hence pride and gratitude are sometimes difficult to be distinguished.

A man who shews no sense of an injury or insult, but continues on cordial and easy terms with the person who has inflicted it, virtually says that he was not unwilling to be so treated, or that he admitted the exercise of such a power over him. This is *meanness*.

A man who dispenses with the ordinary quantity of regard belonging to his peculiar situation, as a magistrate, a military commander, a father, husband, instructor, master of a family, is guilty of meanness. A man who marries a woman that he knows to dislike or despise him, but who has been compelled into his power by indigence or the urgency of relatives, exhibits this meanness. He voluntarily puts himself into a situation where he fails of meeting the regard which that situation ought to procure him.

Dean Swift behaved with spirit when he dismissed a servant who possessed an important secret against him. He would rather undergo all the consequences of discovery than dispense with the obedience due to a master.

A person who unnecessarily exposes, or permits attention to be drawn to, any bodily imperfection,

we reckon guilty of some sort of meanness, since he thereby makes himself liable to be looked upon with a certain degree of disgust and contempt.

It appears to me that our language does not possess terms specifically expressive of the sentiments with which, respectively, we view the exhibition of *spirit* and of *meanness*, as distinct from those excited by actual *power* or *weakness*, on the one hand, and by moral *virtue* or *vice*, on the other.

We are said to despise or feel contempt for meanness; but so we are said also to despise or feel contempt for mental imbecility or bodily weakness. The sentiment which meanness excites* seems more akin to moral disapprobation than to the feelings with which we look upon stupidity or blindness. Yet I am quite unable to identify spirit and meanness with moral virtue and vice, or the emotions with which those are regarded, with moral approbation and disapprobation. For instance, I think it would be difficult to show the *moral guilt* of a low marriage, of a gentleman's sitting down to drink or play at cards with his servants, or his allowing them to slap him on the back and call him by a nick-name. If

* No quality is more valued than spirit; yet its tendency to promote the happiness of the possessor or of others, is very questionable. The happiness he enjoys in the consciousness of it, the pleasure with which they behold it, are obviously the effects, not the cause, of its being reckoned an excellence. See note in p. 214.

I am not mistaken, the sentiments with which we should behold such conduct would be as different from those excited by fraud, theft, or violence, on the part of such a person as supposed, as these latter would be from what we should feel towards him for a hump-back or a weak judgment, for being a dwarf or an idiot.

If a man of respectable and competent circumstances, were to accept of half-a-crown from a superior, either as a gift, or in return for any civility, such as shewing him his way, or fetching his hat and gloves, it would be hard to say where the *moral* impropriety of such conduct lay: yet he might commit adultery without exciting a *stronger* feeling against him.

In whatever way the sentiment excited by the quality denominated *spirit* may be distinguished from that excited by moral virtue, these two sentiments, as well as their opposites, seem to combine with singular force and effect, — no feeling being warmer or more vivid than that, on the one hand, with which we regard the union of spirit and virtue, or that, on the other, which the mixture of meanness and wickedness provokes.

Though true spirit forbids a man to renounce any title to consideration that he may possess, it does not forbid him to pay to others the degree of consideration that justly belongs to them. To withhold this is indeed a species of moral injustice.

To suppose that there are different degrees of rank and consideration belonging to different beings, that every one is naturally desirous to maintain the degree of consideration due to him, and to escape the contempt which must succeed the abandonment of this consideration, is to suppose a susceptibility of *moral injury* belonging to each, in so far as this consideration may be withheld. Respect for any species of power is, in fact, what we must feel whether we will or not : and it is as vain to attempt to stifle it, as to stifle the feelings of moral approbation or disapprobation, or the emotions excited by beauty or deformity. The outward expression or signification of respect, however, is voluntary ; and, if I am not mistaken, we are subject to self-reproach for denying, to any being, the due proportion of respect and observance which his power and consequence seem to demand, as much as for any other species of unkindness or ill treatment inflicted on our fellows ; at all events, if the most obstinate leveller of ranks can bring himself to withhold all respect from his superiors without compunction, I much doubt whether he will also endure the same want of respect from his own inferiors without resentment. It need scarcely be mentioned how much the efficiency of civil government depends on the maintenance of a proper respect from one part of mankind to the other.

In all cases where virtue and spirit are opposed,

we may distinguish, in the complex emotion which the conduct of the agent excites, the peculiar sentiments that are appropriate to each ; and our whole estimation of his conduct is formed in the same manner as in those cases, elsewhere described, in which a sense of duty has to surmount opposing affections.

In noble minds, nothing is more ardently coveted than the approbation and respect of all around them ; nothing more intolerable than their disapprobation and contempt. When a man, then, surrenders character and respect to the demands of duty, and, supported by the mere consciousness of inward rectitude and dignity, endures the reproach of guilt and meanness, he has made the last and most costly sacrifice to virtue that human nature can offer. It is to be observed, too, that in proportion to the strength and universality with which the desire of respect and approbation prevails in every human breast, must be the *power* of overcoming and denying this desire. From our very dependence, therefore, on the good opinions of our fellow men, arises a new source of dignity and glory, that, namely, of throwing off this dependence at the call of duty, and braving their dislike and contempt. Nor is there, in the eyes of mankind, any species of mental power more sublime and imposing, than that which thus confronts their opposition under its most formidable aspect ; and short time indeed can their contempt

maintain itself against the fortitude which thus bears it unmoved.

It is needless to remark that this power over our desire of esteem is as distinct from indifference to that esteem, as the power of enduring bodily pain is distinct from the want of the sense of feeling. The power, in each case, necessarily supposes the previous sensibility, as much as the power of overcoming an enemy supposes that the enemy is able to fight.

The terms expressive of the sentiments excited by the different qualities or attributes of living beings, are by no means of very definite or peculiar application—with the exception perhaps of that which denotes the sentiment excited by moral virtue, to which, exclusively, I believe, the word *approbation* is applied, even in the more correct and legitimate employment of popular phraseology. The word *consideration*, too, seems more peculiarly used to express the feeling with which we regard mere *power*.

Respect seems generally used to denote the feeling excited by power and virtue conjoined, and thus to be compounded of approbation and consideration. I do not think we are said to respect a man for his power alone, or for his virtue alone; unless it is virtue of that kind which implies power—such as courage, fortitude, self-denial, temper.

What is denominated *love*, affection, or attach-

ment towards any being, does not seem of itself a distinct or original sentiment excited towards any quality (as *approbation* towards virtue) or any combination of two or more such original sentiments; but, as consisting of complacency in the society or presence of any one, and a desire to promote his happiness, appears to enter necessarily into all those sentiments which are excited by any species of moral or natural excellence. Thus I imagine that we cannot feel the sentiment of approbation of the virtue, consideration for the power, or respect for the spirit and elevation of mind belonging to any being, without in some degree *loving* him, being pleased to have intercourse with him, and desiring to promote his satisfaction and enjoyment. This, however, seems more especially the case as regards moral virtue when displayed in the shape of *benevolence*: undoubtedly, too, those powers and qualities in others which directly contribute to our own enjoyment, such as beauty and grace of person, cheerfulness, wit, and humour, are most essentially proper to make us desire the society of those who possess such qualities, and hence to heighten our inclination to please and gratify the possessors—in other words, to make us *love* them: so that, on the whole, the qualities that are more peculiarly the objects of love, are those virtuous and benevolent dispositions by which an agent desires to make those around him happy, and those accomplishments which naturally assist in promoting this end.

It has elsewhere been explained how virtue, as displayed in benevolence to others, is of a more attractive nature than when displayed in self-love, however proper and obligatory attention to the good of self may be. It was also observed, however, that the benevolent virtues are not frequently the most arduous or difficult. Hence it happens that benevolent virtues are generally loved, seldom respected; the virtue directed to the good of self often respected, not often loved.

Power, considered in the abstract, particularly if it is power to which we ourselves are subject, has sometimes a tendency to give birth to fear or envy — which stretch into the borders of hatred; while *weakness*, by the complacency which we feel in comparing it with our own strength, and the compassion which it naturally calls for on its own account, is often apt to be viewed with love. This is more especially the case where, as frequently happens, feebleness of body is joined with delicacy and grace of form, or feebleness of mind with innocence and docility. This accounts for part of the tenderness we naturally feel towards females and children.*

* The tenderness felt for infants and very young children, not only by the parents but by all human beings, and even by other children a little older, does not seem to me to be entirely resolvable into any more general principle, but to be itself a special instinct, and one of very great strength; since it appears to exert itself in natures that seem otherwise almost inaccessible to the softer emotions.

From these considerations we may discern how *love* and *respect* generally come to be spoken of as opposed to one another : which is not as being sentiments having opposite qualities for their respective objects (for, as has been explained, love is not a sentiment, the counterpart of respect, but a mixed inclination or desire that may accompany a variety of sentiments) but because the qualities most proper to excite respect, are seldom those which make us happy or at ease in the company of the possessor, or thence desirous, in any anxious degree, to please and gratify him.

Still, however, respect and love are both benevolent in their tendency ; but respect only fears to offend, love desires to please. Love seeks to be with its object, respect to retire to a distance.

Esteem expresses something that is neither respect nor love, nor the entire want of either. It is felt in regard to those qualities which, however useful to the possessor or to others, have neither grandeur nor attractiveness. We *respect* a man for heroic contempt of danger and death, for rigid self-denial, and vigorous command over his passions and temper. We *love* him for his benevolence, humanity, mildness, good humour, and cheerfulness. We *esteem* him for his prudence, diligence, truth, and fair dealing.

The sentiment with which we regard *spirit* bears rather more relation to respect than to love, since spirit is generally associated with mental

power and virtue. Inasmuch, however, as it is for the most part accompanied with, and sometimes denotes, vivacity, animation, and fancy, it is an object of love.

Veneration, reverence, are high degrees of respect. *Regard, value*, are general terms expressive of all the sentiments which excellence excites.

It has already been observed that it seems impossible to have the sentiments either of approbation or esteem, or of regard or love in any shape, without a desire to promote the happiness of the being who is the object of such sentiments. Hence the term applied to these affections of *benevolent*, which, as every body knows, means in its etymological signification — wishing well. The intensity of the affections which the various qualities of the living beings around us call forth, and consequently the strength of the desire we feel to promote their happiness, is therefore very far from being proportioned to our notions of their moral desert, which yet we judge to be the only circumstance that can create a *fitness* why one being should have his enjoyments promoted more than another.* The effects of this bias upon our treatment of different beings, is a fertile subject of complaint to the practical moralist; and it is an

* Other things being alike, it is *fit* that a greater capacity of enjoyment should be fulfilled rather than a smaller capacity; for this flows from the principle that a great happiness should be promoted rather than a small one.

exercise in which the virtuous mind is frequently called upon to employ itself, to attempt to lessen the sway which the attractive qualities thus possess, and to learn to apportion its good offices to the amount of moral desert alone, or to the general obligations which the relations of life may impose.

The question has been asked wherein *moral* differ from *natural* excellences, or virtues from talents. To state the difference between any two things, is, I apprehend, just to describe what the one has, that the other wants; so that, where the points of resemblance are inconsiderable, to state the difference will be just — what in the present instance has been done — to give a description of each. For this reason, the question alluded to seems to me to be much the same as would be that, to ask, what is the difference between music and architecture, or between a good dinner and a comfortable bed.*

* Mr. Hume, with that disposition to unsettle every common opinion, and set the judgments of mankind against one another, which formed the apparent strength, but the real infirmity, of his philosophical genius, has endeavoured to maintain the sameness of moral and natural qualities. Because in some qualities, such as courage, patience, and the like, we cannot distinguish how much is due to nature or constitutional power, how much to voluntary purpose, therefore, according to him, there is no difference between the one and the other, nor in the sort of estimation in which we hold each respectively: — just as if laziness and weakness were one and the same sort of reproach, because, in a man's refusal to bear

It remains to be observed, that we are valued or despised by others, and value and despise ourselves, more according to what is reckoned our natural and ordinary condition, than according to what fortune or accident makes us; until, by length of time, this becomes our natural and ordinary condition. The one thing is viewed as what we are in ourselves, something inherent in us, or essential to us, — a quality indivisible from our personal existence; the other, as what does not affect our real rank in the scale, or alter us from what we actually are, but merely produces a change in some outward circumstances belonging to us.

A rich and powerful individual who is suddenly reduced, by some unforeseen and unavoidable accident, to poverty and obscurity, is rather willing than otherwise to display the greatness of his misfortune, because the sympathy which he meets with is entirely unmixed with any degree of contempt. He is still held in the same *consideration* as he was. Even those who feel no sympathy

a burden, we cannot tell how far he is unable, and how far he is unwilling; or even as if wine and water admitted of no distinction, because we cannot discover the exact portion of each contained in a mixture of the two. Mr. Hume fortifies his doctrine by quoting a variety of instances in which the terms virtues and talents, moral and natural excellences, are applied indiscriminately to the same qualities — which is just the old syllogism, — a man is an animal, and a horse is an animal, therefore a man is a horse!

with him, who are unwilling to relieve him, and who, from personal dislike, may be pleased at his calamity, do not view him with that indifference and carelessness with which those men are viewed who have all along been in the same circumstances in which he is at present. In the course of time, poverty comes to be looked upon as his real condition, and his importance in society is calculated accordingly. But still he is anxious that every one should remember what he once was, what he is still (if I may so express his feeling) in point of fact, though not of appearance. He is still essentially—in his own mind, and even in that of others, when they recall his former state—the man of fortune and consequence, though he happens to want the external appendages of that condition; just as a man actually possessed of rank does not cease to be so, though he should assume the dress and occupation of a coachman.

The same consideration holds in regard to any bodily want or weakness. A man who has long ago had a leg amputated, feels ashamed of his imperfection, and particularly among persons who do not remember what he was before this occurrence. But when he has newly suffered the operation, in consequence of an accident which had befallen him, when known to be perfectly sound in body, he feels nowise uneasy, but rather pleased that his loss is taken notice of; because the sympathy of men is, until this has, by length of time,

become his ordinary condition, unmixed with any idea of his inferiority to others. In like manner, a man born with a natural imperfection is much more ashamed of it, than if it were the effect of an external accident; and one who, by accident, has been permanently injured or deformed, is generally pleased at its being known that he was not born so, — that is, that this is not his natural, but his accidental condition.

The same principle operates in quite another way when the circumstances are altered. A man who is suddenly raised by fortune wishes his new condition to be thought something personal, not accidental and extrinsic. He is accordingly desirous that the memory of his former meanness should be lost both by himself and others. He affects to view his greatness as something familiar to him, and, as I may say, his natural condition. And a man esteems himself, and is esteemed by others, in a still greater degree, if his rank and power can be viewed not as a mere lucky accident befalling himself or his immediate progenitors, but as something essential and inherent in his very race, distinguishing them, as it were, from the rest of the species to which they belong. This I take to be the real cause of the value attached to high birth, splendid connection, and remote ancestry. When a man's family has never been known to be upon a level with others, when his progenitors, even beyond the reach of history and tradition,

have enjoyed exalted station, we almost lose the means by which we can claim or identify him as a partaker of our nature.

And whatever valuable quality of a moral or other kind a living being may be possessed of, however much we might applaud the perseverance or exertion which he might have employed in order to become possessed of such quality, we should attach a greater superiority to him, if we could view such quality as belonging to his *nature*, instead of being an accident or an acquisition.

CHAPTER II.

OF COMBINATIONS OF MORAL AND NATURAL EXCELLENCE.

CERTAIN natural powers are related, in a manner more or less intimate, to moral virtue; certain virtues, also, obtain a more advantageous and free exercise from the aid of particular constitutional powers. Thus arise a species of compound qualities, partaking at once of moral and of natural excellence, and attracting a portion of each of the different sorts of regard that belong to these excellences respectively. And if we take a survey of some of those qualities which are conceived to form the most favourable distinction of a living being, we shall find that they derive their value from this double character, which entitles them at once to moral *approbation*, and to the sentiment which I have expressed by the term *consideration*.

In illustration of this remark, I begin with a reference to the faculty of *taste*.

Taste, in the popular notion of it, implies a power of discovering a certain real quality in objects, the perception of which gives birth to a

high and peculiar delight. Merely as implying *power*, then, and power so desirable to the possessor, taste must appear to possess a high degree of value. But the faculty of taste is, in many ways, related to moral virtue.

Between the emotions of taste, as arising from the perception of natural beauty, and those of moral approbation, as excited by the view of moral virtue, so strong an analogy seems to subsist, that our moral faculty has been represented by some eminent writers under the notion of a *taste*, virtue being a species of *beauty*, the object of that taste. However inadequate and incomplete this notion of moral virtue may be, and however far, generally speaking, the existence of one taste may be from necessarily implying that of another (since, for instance, a taste for poetry may exist without a taste for music) there seems room for a certain degree of presumption, in the particular case, that faculties appearing to resemble one another so strongly, have a natural though not a constant affinity—in other words, that a fine natural taste is indicative of a fine moral taste.

The words in which Shakespeare characterizes the man “who has no soul for music,” are well known; and though obviously a poetical exaggeration, must yet — or the sentiment would at once offend and shock us—be an exaggeration of something not destitute of truth. A similar remark applies to the observation made by Lavater in one

of his aphorisms, that he would not willingly put confidence in a man in whose chamber a picture was allowed to hang awry, or was disposed without a due regard to uniformity.

A priori, then, we might presume a connection between that turn of mind which delights in external order, grace, and beauty, and that which delights in inward rectitude, honour, and propriety.

Could it only be said of the pursuits of taste that they withdraw the mind in some degree from the dominion of selfish avarice and ambition, nay, that they tend to exclude mere idleness and frivolity, even this, apparently negative, praise, would be the praise of obstructing or narrowing some of the most common inlets to vice and corruption. But the emotions of taste, as constituting a frame of mind, seem directly calculated for the nourishment of virtuous purpose. The mind, while under their influence, is open to all that is exalted, honourable, humane, tender, and compassionate; and proportionally averse to whatever is mean, shameful, rigorous, cruel, or selfish.

It would be difficult to name a quality at once so friendly to happiness and to virtue, as a taste for the beauties of external nature. There are few moods of thought — setting aside the incurable agonies of remorse and shame — in which the spirit is so agitated or so depressed, so troubled with the restlessness of joy or the tumults of grief, so wasted by the conflicts of hope and fear, so

sunk in gloom or worn with anxiety, as to be insensible to the soothing effect that is derived from gazing upon the face of nature, which, calm and tranquil, yet always sympathetic with the feelings of her votaries, is able to impart a serenity to the soul only inferior to that which is conveyed by the looks of living affection. This species of taste is, in particular, favourable to solitary reflection and contemplation—and reflection is the nurse of virtue.

A taste for *poetry* implies a lively sympathy with human passions and affections, of which it is one great aim of poetry to furnish a delineation. But this kind of sympathy is decidedly indicative of a benevolent cast of mind. Poetry, besides, is the natural vehicle of generous, refined, and exalted sentiments; and in those hearts which such sentiments delight, there must be chords to vibrate with them in unison. The inclination discoverable in poetical writers to represent virtue as successful, vice as fatal and ruinous, has given birth to the notion of poetical justice. To feel delight in the administration of this justice, is to have the heart warmed with the feelings of virtue.

Didactic and satirical poetry communicate moral lessons in a direct shape; and these lessons must either find, or create, in the mind that possesses a relish for them, an admiration of virtue, a hatred and scorn of vice.

Painting is but the artificial representation of

objects of sublimity or beauty, or of scenes of human interest. A taste for this art may therefore be taken as nearly resolvable into other species of taste now enumerated, and possessing similar claims with these to an alliance with a character of moral goodness.

The power allowed to *music* of exciting to acts of heroism and generosity, the peculiar force and energy which it communicates to the expression of tender or elevated sentiments, sufficiently assert its connection with a disposition morally amiable. "The soul that flows to a pleasant sound" must be a soul susceptible of the impressions which lead to virtue.*

As a species of *taste*, and one which most men

* A writer in Blackwood's Magazine (Dec. 1817) has the following observation on Allan's picture of "A Circassian chief selling to a Turkish pacha captives of a neighbouring tribe taken in war."

"In one only of the attendants do we perceive the expression of pity: it is the musician in the shade, by the side of the pacha. Mr. Allan has here paid a graceful compliment to a sister art. He has told us that a soul which is endued with any perception of the loveliness of nature, whether that loveliness be such as addresses itself to the eye or to the ear, can never be so thoroughly debased, even by the presence and the contemplation of continual tyranny, as to feel no sympathy for affections crushed, injured beauty, and divided love. This, if I be not totally mistaken, was a touch far beyond the reach of any ordinary artist." — On which I take leave to observe, that the remarking of this trait was a touch far beyond the reach of any ordinary connoisseur.

value themselves for possessing, must be reckoned *a sensibility to female beauty*, — considered as distinct from the animal appetite of sex. This taste obviously involves a *benevolent affection* towards a large portion of the species. A fondness for infants and young children — generally viewed as indicative of a kind and good natured disposition— seems to result in a considerable degree from a lively perception of the delicate beauty of their forms, and the perfect grace of their motions. Our attachment to beautiful animals—to birds for instance — arises also from a sensibility to their beauty. In fact, so intimately allied are the perceptions of external beauty to benevolent affection, that whatever is *beautiful*, though an inanimate object, is an object of *love* and *kindness*. We diffuse our benevolence upon a flower or a shrub. Our attachment to a beautiful scene, our desire to preserve or improve its charms, seems almost identifiable with our wish for the society, and our interest in the happiness, of a beloved friend.

But another source of relationship between a susceptibility of the emotions of taste and the dispositions that constitute or are allied to moral virtue—and one of which, for my own part, I am disposed to make no small account—has yet to be pointed out. From admiration of an object or work of taste, the transition is inevitable to attachment towards the creator or author of it. Every time that we admire, or sympathize with, the sen-

timents or conceptions of another being, there takes place a refined and spiritual, indeed, but not less real, act of social intercourse, between us and that being; a tie of relationship seems to spring up between us and the one who has caught the same visions of truth and beauty of which we have, it may be, obtained dim and transient glances, or which at least have been the objects of our aspirations. Every new author, or artist, or composer of excellence, to whose works we are introduced, gives our race a new hold upon us—presents another human being under an aspect of value and interest—thus giving impulse and play, and consequently nourishment, to a set of benevolent feelings. How many sympathies, in how many thousand bosoms, have been warmed towards Sir Walter Scott by the perusal of his writings? Whose heart is moved by the compositions of Handel or Mozart, and is not moved towards the composers? Who gazes with delight on the canvass over which the pencil of Claude, or Titian, or Raphael has passed, and does not feel his mind bound to the minds in which these creations had their birth? — or, to give the thought a higher range — How direct is the connection between a sensibility to the beauties of external nature and emotions of love and gratitude towards the Creator;—or what an aid to piety does not that man want, on whom the gorgeous splendour of an evening sky, or “the firmament glowing with living sapphires,” makes no impression;—who

can look unmoved on the ocean in its varied aspects of sublimity and beauty;—to whose soul the graceful outlines — the bright hues—the shades—the contrasts — the groups and figures of the landscape, possess no charms?

Thus intimate seems the relation between *taste*, and a disposition *morally* amiable. The causes which enter into the formation of individual character are so various and complicated, that it would be too much to say that every man of taste must necessarily be a man of virtue. But there seems no extravagance in maintaining, that by how much a man is addicted to any of the pursuits of taste, by how much he is endowed with the capacity of enjoying the pleasures of taste, he may be taken for so much a better man; nor will it often, I believe, be found in fact, that a man of this description is a sordid, a hard-hearted, or an ill-tempered man.

An *attachment to literary pursuits*, a desire for the acquisition of knowledge in general, will, for the most part, be found to co-exist with a virtuous turn of mind. Every species of literary, as distinguished from scientific composition, is directly or indirectly *didactic*; for though vice may be propagated by books as well as virtue, there is no branch of literature of which this is the nature, though it may be the perversion; and he who has a relish for immoral productions, has not a taste for *literature*, (any more than a merchant, in calculating his pro-

fits, has a turn for mathematics,) but merely for literature, so far as it is a means of pampering his debased propensities. A taste for literature, then, is, in general, a taste for the lessons of virtue. But whoever takes pleasure in what teaches virtue, takes pleasure in virtue itself.

Elegant literature is chiefly occupied with man as its subject. *Homo sum, nihil humanum a me alienum puto* — is alike the motto of the man of letters and the philanthropist; nor can the one character well subsist without an intermixture of the other. Real or fictitious narratives of human transactions, delineations of human joys and sorrows, of human passions and feelings, representations of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, the correction of folly and meanness, the praise of sense and spirit—of what else are the works of the historian, the poet, the dramatist composed? Surely the man who has a relish for such subjects as these must either possess or acquire an interest in the concerns of his fellow-men, and a proper feeling and understanding of the duty that he owes them.

The pursuit of *science* is, so far, the cultivation of taste. He who takes delight in the contemplation of necessary truth, and in the evolution of trains of abstract reasoning — who loves to penetrate into the secrets of nature, to gaze upon the order, the harmony, of nature's laws, and to trace the admirable wisdom and power displayed in the physical government of the universe, must also have a soul

capable of being moved at the view of moral beauty, order, and sublimity. One of the richest sources of pleasure in investigating the laws of nature, consists in the perception of *benevolent design* in the formation of these laws. And who will contemplate with the liveliest emotions of pleasure, the innumerable marks of goodness visible in the works of the Creator — who will most ardently investigate the various modes and instances in which the divine benevolence is exerted? Surely he who possesses within himself the most benevolent heart. Who derives the highest and purest gratification from the view of any invention calculated for the promotion of human happiness and comfort? He to whom human happiness and comfort is the object of greatest interest: and those who are engaged in scientific pursuits are thus, not merely in effect, but often also in intention, engaged in works of beneficence and mercy.

It is, I suspect, impossible to deny that there is another view of this subject, than that now given, — under which a high degree of taste and mental cultivation must appear to be, at least, more favourable to innocence than to active virtue; more calculated to make us relish the goods, than to endure the evils of life. The mind, wrapt up in its own enjoyment, is apt to forget that there are laborious duties to be performed, rigorous trials to be encountered. A sickly sentimentalism is sometimes generated, which, gazing with tender sym-

pathy upon pictures of sorrow, painted in its beauty, its grace, its elegance, shrinks from beholding the hard, the coarse, the disgusting lineaments of real distress. If the pleasures of refinement are exquisite, so too are its pains. The refined mind presents a tenderer, a more irritable surface to the rubs and lacerations of life — a surface that receives a wound from almost every thing with which it comes in contact. — That all these effects do sometimes proceed from refinement of mind, may be true; but they are rather the accidental, than the natural effects; the effects of excessive, rather than of ordinary degrees of refinement; effects capable of being separated from those that are beneficial, and separately guarded against. At all events it is sufficient for what has been my purpose (that of accounting for the mixture of *moral approbation*, or something resembling it, that is found in the sentiments with which we regard certain mental accomplishments) that the connexion between intellectual refinement and moral virtue, is the nearer and more apparent connexion; that between intellectual refinement, and certain habits inimical to virtue, the more distant, and more concealed.

If we pass from tastes or propensions to what may more properly be called *powers* of mind, we may discover somewhat of the same alliance between these, and other qualities of a *moral* kind. It has always appeared to me that the *virtue* of

any moral agent depends more upon his mental capacity or abilities than is generally allowed. Nor do I merely mean that, from intellectual superiority, he will be better acquainted with his duty — for this cannot admit of a doubt — but also that he will thence be more strongly disposed to perform it. In fact, the latter proposition flows from the former ; for the degree of importance that a man attaches to the performance or the violation of his duty, must be in some proportion to the degree of moment which, in his apprehension, belongs to the consequences of that neglect or violation. Now undoubtedly a man of quickness and comprehension can trace these consequences more extensively, and of course be impressed with a greater sense of their magnitude, than a man of a more confined understanding. But even where the consequences of actions, as regards merely their extent, may come equally within the grasp of both, it seems reasonable to suppose that, as the rational faculty perceives how an action that produces happiness is *fit* and *obligatory*, one that produces misery *unfit* and *wrong*, the clearest and strongest reason must perceive this the most clearly and strongly ; just as it must perceive the most clearly and strongly what properties result from the nature of any mathematical figure : and surely the greater the strength and clearness with which obligation is perceived, the greater must be

the influence of that perception on the disposition and conduct of the agent.

Most assuredly too, a lively fancy or imagination, by heightening the conception we form of another being's happiness or misery, quickens our desire to further the one, and relieve the other. Sympathy, in its strict and proper meaning, is not the same as compassion or benevolence — though it naturally gives birth to these ; but the liveliness of our sympathy must in a great measure depend on the strength of our fancy. A capability of sympathy, in fact, is just a power of forming in our minds a vivid conception of another being's happiness or misery.

That men of parts are not always men of virtue, experience but too strongly testifies ; but so does it also testify that industry does not always lead to prosperity, nor virtue and talents to honour and distinction. In other words, intellectual perfection may be in general favourable to virtue, though not always able to counteract opposing influences — nay though, in some few respects, of an opposite tendency itself. Men of genius and sensibility are open to allurements against which less gifted natures may be proof. Their passions exert a superior strength. Conscious too of their *power*, they can form and execute schemes for the attainment of their favourite objects, which would never be attempted by men destitute of capacity and

enterprise. The virtue of many men, then, may be only their inability to appreciate a valuable object, or to devise or execute the means of obtaining it. Had Napoleon Bonaparte been less alive to the fascinations of glory and power, less endowed with the talents which gave effect to his purposes of ambition, he had never been heard of as the unprincipled subverter of national independence, and the promoter of universal bloodshed and devastation.

But while men of stronger and finer capacities are thus sometimes exposed to peculiar and powerful inducements to crime, they never, I believe, display that apparently *gratuitous* attachment to wickedness, which sometimes characterizes an extreme depression of intellect. On the contrary, though violating, and in time becoming callous to moral restraints, while pursuing the gratification of their passions and desires, they are ready to display, in other, and perhaps more general respects, a regard to justice, kindness, and compassion, and to labour with exemplary perseverance in works of beneficence and public improvement. Of this the famous, or infamous personage, just named, affords a striking example. On the other hand, if I mistake not, most of those who have obtained an ignominious celebrity as the willing tyrants and oppressors of their species, — the Neros — the Caligulas — the Domitians — were as much alike to some of the brute creation in

stupidity and ignorance, as in cruelty and fierceness.

I believe the greater part of those criminals who are publicly executed for crimes of brutal violence and inhumanity, are found to be sunk in the extremity of mental abasement ; and in the circumstances attending the commission of such crimes, is often exhibited a preposterous folly in the purpose entertained, and a childish imprudence in the means employed to obtain concealment.

On the whole it does not appear to me too much to say, that men of superior mental endowments, though not incapable of sacrificing duty to interest, pleasure, or passion, are never without an admiration of, and attachment to virtue, on its own account, and a similar contempt of, and aversion to vice : that mental debasement, while it indisposes to some crimes, and incapacitates for others, is attended also with a bluntness of the moral perceptions, and a comparative indifference to virtue and vice.

In what stage of the existence, both of communities and individuals, is cruelty exercised as it were for its own sake ? In their infancy. Rude nations are generally cruel and unfeeling ; so are young children. On the other hand, when do we behold the infliction of pain viewed as something which it is of consequence to avoid — when does the promotion of happiness come to appear as an important and interesting object ? In the advance

of life and of society. Are children or savages virtuous? It is merely as they are hungry and thirsty — from natural impulse. Are men of cultivated minds wicked? It is not because they feel no disinclination to be so, but because they cannot, without being wicked, compass their ulterior designs. To advance the intellectual character of a nation, then, is to advance their moral character; not merely as it makes them more acquainted with their duty, but more alive to its influence.*

Certain powers of the mind receive the denomination of *moral* in opposition to *intellectual*. Such are courage, temper, and the like. *Power*, and *good disposition* are so intimately associated in the conception we form of these qualities, that it is difficult to say which is the predominant part of the conception, or to separate the one part of it from the other.

Courage is a *power* of overcoming the passion of fear — which power again stands in a great measure on that of governing the imagination. But such a *power* as this — that of repressing fear — seems necessarily to involve an indifference or disregard for *self*, for the pain or danger that may accrue to self: and this carelessness about self,

* I think, in my own experience, I have generally observed a great want of moral principle joined with a narrow and feeble capacity; and that vice admits of this palliation in a greater degree than is often allowed to it.

has been elsewhere shewn to assimilate with the general principle of *virtue*.

Temper is a *power* of subduing the emotions of resentment, or of sorrow combined with resentment, in the various shapes of peevishness, discontent, chagrin, vexation, sullenness. With this power is necessarily associated a small degree of consideration for *self*, and the concerns of self, and a great degree of consideration for others; patience of their slights and injuries, as what, being committed against self, are of little moment; allowance for their weaknesses, disinclination to mortify or irritate them in turn: — in general, an acquiescence in all that befalls self, an anxiety lest others should suffer at the same time.

So of *fortitude* and *patience* in serious afflictions. The *power* lies in mastering the grief and impatience: the *virtue* in the small account thereby made of self.

The quality of *spirit* is at least thus far allied to virtue, that, as an aversion to the control and superiority of others, it is often little else than aversion to their injurious conduct—in other words, a strong and lively indignation against moral wrong—injustice. The union of *spirit* and high *moral sensibility*, is that disposition which feels an injury the most keenly. Spirit has already been discriminated from ambition; the former, as what merely seeks to maintain its own degree of rank and consideration, the latter, as what seeks to rise

above others; and the reason why the one is more amiable than the other is easily explained from the moral character of each; the first merely asserting justice, the second being apt to impose injustice. Merely as a wish to be possessed of *power*, conceived as forming a species of excellence, both are respected and admired.

Thus it appears that many even of those qualities which are more properly called *natural*, in opposition to *moral*, possess nevertheless such a relation and alliance to moral virtue, either as occasions or consequences of it, or in some way or other indicating its existence, that in the peculiar species of regard in which such qualities are held, we seem to discover something of that more heartfelt warmth and cordiality which moral qualities are always found to excite.

This much seems certain, that any intimate union of natural and moral excellences, is that which calls forth a deeper and more cordial sentiment of attachment and veneration, than any degree of either of these excellences, singly existing, seems calculated to produce.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE VIEWS AND PRINCIPLES WHICH SERVE FOR THE FOUNDATION OF A CHARACTER OF VIRTUOUS INDEPENDENCE.

IN the preceding chapter, I endeavoured to make it appear that a variety of those qualities which we most regard a human being for possessing, are resolvable into a certain combination, on the one hand, of some species of *power*, or affection towards power; on the other, of that disposition which I have elsewhere represented as constituting the essence of moral virtue, namely, a great regard for the happiness of others, a comparatively small regard for the happiness of self.

If, passing from the consideration of particular qualities, we fix our view on some general character of a kind the most admired and revered, we shall find the same views apply. Perhaps no species of general character excites a higher degree of admiration than what is called *independence of mind*, understood in a large and favourable sense; nor will it be an unsuitable mode of bringing to a close a treatise in which little of a

didactic or descriptive nature has been introduced, if I attempt to exhibit the views and principles that serve for the foundation of a character, which, if it does not display the entire form of human perfection, displays perhaps as much of it as can be comprehended in any single view.

What is called independence of mind is not properly a separate quality or power, but rather a general manifestation of intelligence and virtue.

The independence of a man's mind is shewn both in his judgments, and in his conduct.

Independence in judgment seems to imply two things: first, the free exercise of a man's own thinking faculties, grounded in a just confidence in his ability to form an opinion for himself; and next, a power of preserving his own opinions unshaken by external influence.

An independent exercise of judgment, as thus described, will seem to coincide with, or comprehend, two very unamiable features of character, namely,—conceit, and obstinacy; and from these we must carefully attempt to distinguish it.

Between that confidence in a man's own powers which we esteem, and that which we despise, and denominate conceit, there is this difference, that the one is founded on the habit and experience of employing those powers with effect, the other in a fictitious and groundless estimate of them. Between firmness and obstinacy, in like manner, there is this difference, that the one is the main-

tenance of a determination for reasons perceived to exist in the circumstances of the case ; the other, for reasons affecting the pride or vanity of the party acting*.

There is nothing, every one will allow, so respectable, so dignified, so excellent, as firmness ; nothing so mean, so stupid, so offensive as obstinacy : yet when we come to inquire what, in the practical judgments of mankind, distinguishes the one species of conduct from the other, we are forcibly reminded of the good bishop's whimsical definition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy :—you are *firm*, then, if you maintain what I would have you

* Independence and decision of character are thus not always united. A man who, in taking his resolution, is guided solely by the merits of the case, regardless of how his own pride, or vanity, or ease, will be affected by that resolution, is liable to change his mind at every fresh view of the subject. Hence the most candid and fair minds are sometimes the most timid, changeable, and irresolute ; and hence a small degree of obstinacy, even in the strict sense of the term, is not always, in effect, a bad quality — at least in cases where expediency is principally concerned, as often happens in the management of public measures — since it is often better to persevere in a course that is not altogether the best, than to be perpetually changing. But a man who, on this account, perseveres in a course once adopted, that is, from a conviction that the course begun is, if not the best in itself, the best in respect that it has been begun, cannot properly be charged with obstinacy ; since his resolution, in this instance, is really taken upon a judgment of the *merits of the case*, as the case stands, in regard to all circumstances, at the given moment.

to maintain : you are *obstinate* if you maintain any thing against me.—Nor is our mode of estimating degrees of obstinacy of a very dissimilar cast to this. The oftener we provoke, by reiterated importunities, a refusal to our suit, the more obstinate is he who refuses : no matter why, or how, he does refuse : the fact of refusal is enough. And what, in this way, comes to be the measure of his obstinacy ? Why, just our own. How is he so obstinate in refusing, but merely as we are so obstinate in urging him ?—with this difference in his favour, that we attack, he only defends.

In the mere fact of forming an opinion for himself, and adhering to it when formed, an independent man is the same with a conceited man, and an obstinate man. But as the charge of conceit can never lie against a man merely for choosing rather to see the grounds of an opinion than to take the report of another upon these grounds, so the reproach of obstinacy cannot be applied to any degree of resistance to importunity, so long as that resistance proceeds merely from a mind unchanged, and not from an unwillingness to be changed, or to own the change. He is conceited with whom an opinion must be right, not because, in his apprehension, it has grounds, but because it is *his*. He is obstinate who perseveres in an opinion, not because he cannot see his error, but because he will not admit it. Independence of judgment then, as implying the free formation of

an opinion, and the confident maintenance of it, is opposed, not to that rational modesty which makes a man sensible of his own fallibility, and willing to profit by the wisdom of others, but to that incapacity which cannot, or that indolence which will not think for itself; not to that candour and openness which is willing to have an opinion questioned, and, if found erroneous, to renounce it, but to that weakness and indecision on which not evidence but authority operates; which makes a man ever ready to give way to the fashion of the day, to the sneer of the scoffer, to the wish of a friend, to the pleasure of a superior, to the mere asseveration of a dogmatist. With a man of independent mind, an opinion is not true merely because it is formed by him, or maintained merely because it has once been uttered by him. It is true, because he perceives satisfactory grounds for its being reckoned so; it is maintained, because no sufficient reason has been shewn for departing from it.

Independence of mind implies, secondly, independence in acting; and, in this particular, might perhaps be defined as *the power of easily disengaging the mind from particular attachments*. It seems to involve the notion of three things:—of something that a man does *not* depend upon, and which he can readily sacrifice; an *end* or purpose for which such sacrifice is incurred; and something which he *does* depend upon, as reconciling

him to the sacrifice, and enabling him to submit to it.

The end or object of an independent man's regard, that in the pursuit of which he disengages himself from the ties, the holds, the entanglements, that beset him, is virtue, moral obligation, propriety — whatever is fit, reasonable, dignified, or becoming — whatever, in reason, in duty, or in honour, he *ought* to do. And what, again, is that, which, in this pursuit, a man ceases to place his dependence upon — which he will always be willing to renounce and abandon? Whatever it may be, the answer is, that chances to stand in the way of such pursuit; whether his ease, his comforts, his inclinations, his habits, his projects, his partialities, his affections. For this, he will renounce favour, and defy hostility; he will part with a friend, and create an enemy; he will lose popularity, and endure odium; he will forfeit praise, and incur blame; he will abandon respect, and brave contempt. And what is that, again, on which a man, following a rational and virtuous course of action, but following it thus, at all hazards, through so many difficulties, *does* depend? To this it might be enough to answer, — that virtue is its own support; that the conscious pride of rectitude is at once the prop and the reward of the exertions it calls for: but it may still be allowable to inquire, considering how frail and imperfect human virtue is, and how generally it is ob-

liged to look around for external assistance — it may be allowable, I say, to inquire, from what views of things does the independent man derive his confidence; where is the reserve he has in store by which he can afford to throw away so much; from whence does he expect to reap the compensation of his sacrifices; what, in short, are the natural means or qualifications which aid and fortify his sense of virtue? I answer, in the first place, a just and reasonable valuation of the goods and ills of life, not merely as they are in themselves, or in regard to one another, but as they affect the general sum of what a man has to enjoy or suffer in the course of an ordinary life. It is wrong to imagine that human happiness is *one thing*, which must exist entire, or not exist at all; or even that it is made up of a definite stock of particular enjoyments, the subtraction of any one of which must proportionally lessen the amount. On the contrary, what appears lost, is often but exchanged; what seems a sacrifice, but a price; we find one path stopped, but to turn us into another that is more pleasant. Human happiness, then, is not the solid and brittle mass which, once receiving a stroke, separates into fragments, or of which a portion once broken off can never be joined or replaced: but rather resembles the yielding fluid, which may be stirred, agitated, and mixed, and its whole volume lessened; but the nature of which is constantly to recover its level,

and immediately to replace that which has been abstracted. A man, then, who looks upon the condition of human life as it is, will feel persuaded, that, what with certain laws that direct the current of worldly events, what with certain others that regulate the human heart and mind, so it is, that on nothing does the general happiness of life so necessarily and exclusively hang, that it cannot learn to cling to something besides. But following the path of reason and duty does not necessarily subject a man to continual sacrifices, or to every species of sacrifice at once. While the independent man, then, does not depend upon any thing in particular, he may depend upon every thing in general. He rests his happiness, not on this or that object, but on the whole chance of life as it may reasonably be calculated. He *does* depend upon the stability of that merciful constitution of things — the *vis medicatrix naturæ* — by which the removal of one enjoyment often makes room for another ; by which past disappointments and mortifications give place to new hopes and designs ; cherished habits mould themselves into new shapes ; cherished attachments blighted, again spring up into fresh shoots and blossoms ; cherished supports undermined, again fix into new and firm foundations : by which trials that seemed alike immitigable and intolerable, alike interminable and helpless, are withdrawn, softened, compensated, familiarized, forgotten,—in a manner

as incomprehensible as that in which the violence and gloom of the tempest sometimes pass, on a sudden, into calm and sunshine: by which, in short, amid all the crosses, and cares, and buffetings, and embarrassments, and distresses of life, tranquillity, and even happiness, does eventually establish itself,—independently of what we can do, nay, in spite of what we can do—as the ordinary and prevalent condition of human existence.

For how often do we determine that we will not be comforted for the loss of that on which we have set our hearts! How often do we dash away the comfort that is offered us for that of which we have been deprived, while we resolve, in impotent bitterness, never again to come upon terms with the power that determines our lot—to yield to no compromise, to accept of no favour, short of the entire fulfilment of our demand. Alas! while that power casts but a pitying smile on our impiety and ingratitude, our passion already begins to subside, our tears to dry, our countenance to brighten, a new toy has caught our eye, absorbs our attention, engrosses every power of our mind; we pursue it with all the intensity and ardour of desire;—yet it too may be fated to escape our grasp, or, if seized, may be looked upon and thrown away, some other gewgaw having in the mean time struck our fancy, to be, in its turn, snatched away, or thrown away, but at all events—forgotten.

By views such as have been described, a man of independent mind is enabled to rate particular joys and sorrows at little, as bearing but an insignificant influence on the general happiness or misery of existence; and though he needs not, in the pursuit of virtue, renounce his worldly felicity as a whole, he places no reliance on this or that particular part — at least no reliance that cannot be easily withdrawn.

But though a view of even the chances, or probable course of human life in general, thus lessens the importance of every single incident, and its power of influencing our plans of action, it is not by a reference to chances alone,—nor even by reflecting on those beneficent constitutions of Providence by which the mind learns to adapt itself to every chance—that a man of independent mind reconciles himself to the various sacrifices and disappointments which he may be called upon to incur. He feels, and is entitled to feel, that there is that in his system of conduct which will ultimately enable him, not merely to submit to events, but, in some respects, to influence and guide them; that it is the very nature of the principle on which he acts, not merely to qualify him for overcoming obstacles, but at last to annihilate them; to turn in his favour those hostile feelings and dispositions which, at the outset of his course, he felt the greatest pain and difficulty in withstanding. For it is not in the obstructions

to his worldly views, it is not in the privations, the toils, and difficulties of life, in the abridgment of his ease, his comforts, or his pleasures, that the man who aspires to independence of character experiences the most formidable hindrances. To these he can submit, and is proud to submit; without paying the price, he could not value the purchase. It is in the thoughts, the words, the countenances, of those around him, in which resides the power that can most effectually impede him. The hatred, the ridicule, of the avowedly or notoriously worthless, is but the least he may have to bear; he may be called upon to sustain the suspicion or displeasure of those whom he most reveres, as honourable, wise, and good. To his best beloved friends, he may be obliged to appear unkind; to his sect or party, inconstant; to his benefactor, ungrateful.—Now from the very nature of the case, it can seldom happen, that any *honest* feeling which, through prejudice or misconception, may be found in array against virtue, can be of long duration—I say any *honest* feeling; for against every other, there is no defence but contempt)—and the sentiments of attachment, respect, and approbation, which some unfavourable appearance may, for a moment, have relaxed, acquire, by re-action, a tenfold force, the moment that appearance is removed; and unfavourable appearances will, in time, be removed, if not by the elucidation of the particular case, at least by

the application, to that case, of judgments founded on a variety of other cases. For a man must just submit to have his conduct analysed by the same rules of induction that are employed in the investigation of probable truth in general. Where corrupt motives may, among others, influence his conduct, the possibility must exist that these are the motives which *do* affect it; until it has appeared, from the issue of numerous trials, made under various combinations of circumstances, that virtue and honour, with, without, or against other motives, invariably prevail; and this once established, the trials of virtue may be said to be finished. Nor is it only fair opposition that is thus extinguished. Every species of opposition to virtue, if it does not succeed, must itself be overcome. There can be no divided field. No wit or fancy can make virtue ridiculous: no ingenuity, no power of eloquence, can make virtue hateful. Virtue may be made to appear as vice or folly, and, as vice or folly, may be reprobated and derided; but once render it impossible for it to wear these appearances, and its triumph is complete. This however is the work of time and perseverance. Many a calumny, many a sneer, must be borne; many a misconception, many a suspicion, must remain unobviated. But all that is wanting to make opposition at length cease, is, that it be resolutely encountered. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from thee”—is the precept

of sacred writ. Resistance operates with the same effect against those who, among the human race, best merit the demoniacal appellation—those who seek to perplex, deter, or seduce the followers of virtue. The most that the enemies of virtue can aim at, is to make a trial of its strength: knowing that, in its own nature, it is able to overcome, — if an accidental weakness does not soon shew itself, they can have no encouragement to maintain a prolonged attack.

Thus then the man who, in the pursuit of virtue and honour, summons up resolution to endure the estrangement, the suspicion, the displeasure, which this line of conduct may be expected to provoke, is not without a succession of resources with which to fortify his determination. Were the conscious pride of virtue not enough in itself, there are other consolations yet in store. The fabric of human happiness is, in ordinary circumstances, built upon so many pillars, that even if one could be broken down faster than another is repaired, still the main structure can remain steadily balanced. But this is not all; nor need we content ourselves with supposing that the trials of virtue are such as may be compensated, or such as one may be reconciled to bear. To bear them — at least some of the worst of them — is ultimately and in effect to end and exterminate them — nay, to convert them into blessings. If the respect of mankind is either agreeable in it-

self, or capable of being subservient to worldly advancement ; if there is either any immediate gratification in influencing the opinion and actions of others, or any valuable purposes for which that influence may be employed — by no one is this respect, is this influence, are these purposes, more likely to be in the end obtained, than by him who sets out with the resolution to set them at nought ; who follows virtue and honour, and lets every thing besides follow him ; who, in one word, maintains his *independence*, and holds on his way through evil report and good report.

Little needs be said for the purpose of evincing that the materials of which this character is composed, are just those which have been described as forming the excellence of a rational being. Virtue and spirit are what constitute its basis. The regular and consistent performance of his duty, the maintenance of his rank and place as a moral and rational being, the asertion 'of his freedom,— freedom of thought and freedom of agency,—and the bursting assunder of every tie by which he may be held in undue and inglorious subjection to the will of other beings, or to his own passions, affections, or appetites, — these are the very aims of the independent mind ; nor can independence, either of thought or action, be maintained, without the possession and exercise of *power* — power both intellectual and moral. Without intellectual power, and the consciousness of intellectual power,

there can be no place for that generous confidence in one's own internal resources, which acts as the mainspring of every nobler purpose and resolve. Nor will he who is entirely destitute of mental vigour be apt to indulge aspirations of this nature, any more than those living beings whose limbs are formed only for motion along the surface of the solid earth, will seek to emulate the winged tribes in bearing themselves upwards into a finer element. But, in the maintenance of independence, it is not enough that a man can perceive, can comprehend, can judge. He must also be able to resolve, to persevere, and to endure. He must not only be qualified to understand and discover what is the right and honourable course, but calmly to abide the privations, and resolutely face the trials, in which that course may involve him: thus exhibiting that *moral* power which is the crown of all other excellences.

But though it may be true that an independent mind cannot often be found to exist but in company with certain original endowments, the seeds of such a character are in some measure sown in every human breast, and are more or less capable of being nourished and reared up by voluntary cultivation. Both the dispositions and the powers of which it is composed are improvable by exercise. Attachment to duty, desire of freedom, are the moving impulses; mental activity, patience, self-denial, and fortitude, are the qualities which

these impulses put in requisition. Both the one and the other kind strictly come within what is reckoned to lie in a man's own power ; and if independence of mind, in a more restricted signification than I have attached to it, may exist without moral virtue, or at least moral virtue in its purest and most complete form, nothing is more incontestible than that moral virtue can never flourish without independence of mind. In a world of trial and probation, where we are so much more constantly, as well as more arduously engaged in avoiding evil, than in doing good, a habit of easily dispensing with any prized object, of loosing the mind at pleasure from whatever that may be on which it may have fastened itself, will almost constitute a description of virtue. Independence of mind is, I believe, more generally understood as relative to the influence exercised over us by other men : but *the greatest slave of other men is he who is the greatest slave of himself*. He only can throw off the dominion of others, who can throw off the dominion of his own appetites, his own passions, his own habits — for the gratification of which he must otherwise sell his freedom, and become the slave of the purchaser. But even if we confine ourselves to what may be called a disinterested submission to the influence of others, a fear of offending them, or of provoking their displeasure, their ridicule, their coldness, their reproach, — of this species of weakness it is not too

much to say, that if it does not absolutely foster vice, there is no rock on which characters naturally well disposed are more apt to make shipwreck. Ungoverned passion, sensual appetite, mere idleness, has each its thousands of victims—I believe the force of example, the pursuit of fashion, false shame, false modesty, false good nature, have their ten thousands — and those from among that description of persons whose minds are otherwise the most open to impressions of virtue. Nor do I think that I render an unacceptable service to the cause of virtue, in endeavouring to counteract this criminal and dishonourable facility, and to balance the aversion which every generous mind feels at becoming the subject of ridicule or contempt, of provoking enmity, or forfeiting popularity, by representing the overcoming of this aversion, *in the cause of virtue and true honour*, as an act of the most ennobling and exalted heroism.

If it is thought that these observations have a tendency to encourage a proud, self-sufficient, and intractable, — or a cold and insensible disposition, without good nature, and without warmth of affection, I can only answer, that such has not been my purpose ; and that the independence I have praised is that only which is exercised for the sake of *virtue and propriety*. I must leave to my readers to limit and define my observations where necessity appears — simply observing, that

every direction may be abused or unreasonably extended : such a precept, for instance, as that to conquer the fear of death, we may conceive to be employed by the criminal in order to lessen his dread of the laws ; but it is not natural thus to pervert such a precept — a precept which will generally be followed to a good purpose, or not followed at all.

In what is next to be observed, however, something may be found calculated to correct and soften the spirit in which the cultivation of an independent mind may seem to have been hitherto recommended.

Among the props or supports on which independence of mind may best be raised, the strongest has yet to be mentioned. It is *religious faith* : — not that faith which consists in an entire prostration of the intellect to the church, the creed, or the dogmatist, that we have been accustomed to follow — which rates its purity and strength by the quantity of nonsense it can swallow, and the virulence with which it pursues every appearance of doubt or dissent — a faith at once contemptible for its imbecility, and terrible for its ferocity — but that faith which is, first, a *rational* conviction of the existence and the providence of God, and of the reality of a future state of reward for the righteous ; and, next, the *habit* of preserving that conviction strongly and constantly in the mind, and of readily and effectually opposing it to the

impressions of mere sense and imagination — the habit, in short, of acting with the view of another life continually “in the mind’s eye.”

Faith is frequently spoken of as something which is the opposite of reason, and to which reason must be subjected. I conceive it to be just the reverse, and to be, in reality, that which enables reason to triumph over what is the enemy of reason. Nor is it only in religious matters that there is occasion for the exercise of faith, or in which the weakness of reason is felt. The affairs of time present frequent scope for the operation of the same principle. Reason, for instance, tells a man that a circumstance which affects him with the liveliest joy or grief at the present moment, will, after a short lapse of time, be disregarded or forgotten. But, while his grief or joy is yet in its strength, can he easily feel or be practically persuaded of this, so as to be able to moderate his present emotions? — And if he can bring himself to view the matter as he will do some time hence, and thus rate it at its due importance, — whether, I pray, do we think that reason in this case overcomes, or is herself overcome? Whether do we call him a man of a stronger mind, if he seems persuaded that he will always feel as he does just now, or that his present feelings will change or subside? — Reason tells a man that he will lie insensible in his grave, unappalled by the gloom and silence, unencumbered by the straitness of his confine-

ment, or the weight that presses above and around him; unpained and undisgusted by the corruption in which he is dissolved, and the reptiles that feed on his remains. Plainly as reason tells all this, is he not reckoned a man of a strong mind who can really *feel* it, so as to think of death and the grave with indifference? or is not this reckoned a signal effort of reason? — From these and many other instances that might be produced, it fully appears, that we cannot always feel *practically and effectually persuaded* of what *reason quite plainly assures us* — that there is therefore room for something superadded to reason, something different from reason,—but which yet is so far from stifling or enfeebling it, that it supplies its deficiency, and enables it to prevail, where it would otherwise give way. This, in matters of religion, is called *Faith*; and though the term, in this use, is peculiar to the Christian Scriptures, it expresses something which has place as well in natural, as in revealed religion; as well in relation to the affairs of this world, as to the affairs of the next. The atheist who considers death to be an eternal sleep, — the deist who believes that, in a future state, the same beneficence will be employed in providing for his happiness that appears to be exercised in regard to his present being, and that an impartial justice will correct the moral disorders to which human affairs are now exposed—every man of reflection, let his religious creed be what it will, or let him

have none at all — will at times lament the weakness of his faith, as well as the Christian does; will lament that what his reason clearly tells him, he yet cannot maintain his confidence in; that he cannot help fearing, where reason tells him all is safe; hoping, where reason denies the existence of grounds; grieving without reason, rejoicing without reason; that this power, in short, which ought to be supreme in his breast, is often the sport of his senses, his passions, and his imagination.

Religious faith, then, is that principle, by which, when certain convictions of the understanding have once been formed, we are enabled to rest with security on those convictions, undisturbed by the various delusions by which they are liable to be clouded; to soar above the importunities of sense, make the future become the present, and behold these things which are invisible to the bodily eye.

Thus understood, it would denote, not a weakness to be despised, but a *power* to be respected; a power, not of subjecting reason to authority, but of correcting sensible and present impressions by reason.*

* This is the prevalent sense of the term *faith* in the scriptures, — where a weak faith, or a strong faith, are expressions denoting the degree of power with which certain convictions of the understanding can maintain themselves against opposing principles. There may be belief without faith, but not faith without belief.

How much independence of character is fortified by religious faith, it would be superfluous to illustrate. This has been a triumphant theme of devotional eloquence in all ages; and some of the sublimest passages of holy writ are animated by the fervour it inspires. It must be confessed too, that in the steadiest and coolest, nay, in the most favourable and sanguine view we can take of human life, there is much to intimidate our courage, much to relax our confidence; that cases, alas! are numerous, in which the vanity of every human support is powerfully felt, and where the agitated soul is driven to seek for a firmer and more enduring refuge than the circumstances of its worldly existence can afford. This support is religious trust. Nor is it merely a more sure and efficacious source of confidence than what may be found in worldly principles. The manner of its operation on the heart and affections is of a more salutary kind. By perpetually suggesting the idea of a higher and more powerful, a holier and more perfect being, it checks presumption, abates conceit, preserves the affections from becoming cold, and corrects the feelings of pride or indifference towards mankind which the indulgence of a high-souled confidence is apt to nourish, by preserving the recollection of a common origin, a common dependence, a common end.

It will sufficiently appear, too, from what has been said, that so far is the exercise of religious

faith from lessening the dignity and excellence of that character of which a description has now been offered, that it bestows on it an additional lustre ; since instead of denoting, as too commonly supposed, a vain and feeble credulity, a mean and submissive surrender of the intellectual faculties to visionary and superstitious delusions, it has been shewn to be identifiable with some of those internal efforts in which *power and energy of mind* are held to be the most conspicuously displayed, and the infirmities of human nature the most triumphantly overcome.

CONCLUSION.

ON THE RELATION OF MORALITY TO RELIGION, NATURAL AND REVEALED.

THE subject touched upon at the close of the preceding chapter, affords me the opportunity of observing, in conclusion, that if I have omitted in the course of this work to treat of the *relation in which morality stands to religion*, it has not been from wanting a conviction of the closeness of this relation, but from supposing it too obvious to require to be pointed out. Religion is nothing else but morality towards the Deity, and towards ourselves, and others, considered as dependent upon the Deity; in other words, the religious man is one who bears towards the Deity those feelings and sentiments which, in their mutual relation, are *morally right*, and who, as a duty to himself and others, endeavours to promote his own and their happiness, and to avert his own and their misery, by propitiating the favour of the Deity, and avoiding his wrath. To say, then, that a man may be a good moral man and destitute of religion, is,

as if we should say, that he is a good moral man, but has no affection towards his father, no gratitude towards his benefactor, no care about avoiding his own ruin or that of others.—Setting all other considerations aside, surely that man who can behold the wonderful, the minute, the extensive provisions, which the mercy of a beneficent Creator has made for the comfort and happiness of all his creatures, and yet remain untouched by love and gratitude ; or who can contemplate that power which gives existence and motion to systems of worlds, and yet not fear to provoke the anger of Him by whom that power is wielded—surely such a man cannot escape the imputation either of hardness of heart, or deficiency of understanding—surely it is a perversion of words to say that that can be a wise or a *moral* man.

A few words to those who, while they would not be thought destitute of becoming feelings towards the Author of nature, think that the doctrines of *revelation*, or even the question as to the truth or falsehood of revelation itself, are subjects to which they may decline giving attention.

The usual motto of such persons is this :

“ For modes of faith let angry zealots fight,
His can't be wrong, whose *life* is in the right.”

Which is much the same as if a man should say — I do all that the law could require me to do — therefore I need not mind *what the law is*, or pay

any regard to the authority of the magistrate.—To assume that your *life* is in the right, while you dispense with inquiring what is the will of the all-wise Being who may be presumed to be the best judge of what is right for you — and obedience to whose will is, of itself, one great part of what is right — is certainly a mode of settling the matter which is at least as remarkable for its convenience, as for its reasonableness.

Whether such a religion as Christianity is true, is not a question like whether the Polar sea is fluid, whether Troy stood, or whether the queen of Scots was guilty or innocent ;—it is whether the Being who formed the universe, and who must have the supreme disposal of it and of all that it contains, has, or has not, ever conveyed to mankind any knowledge of his will, or of their destiny. If a revelation is what, *à priori*, cannot be shewn to be impossible, and if there is, in favour of any particular system, a *prima facie* case made out, the conscientious believer in the *existence of a Deity* cannot excuse himself from making a full and candid examination of the proofs.

That there is a *prima facie* case for the truth of Christianity, may surely be held as clear from the circumstance that it has been believed by many able and enlightened men, in all countries and ages. If Christianity is a cheat, it is a cheat that has imposed upon some of the most enlarged and comprehensive intellects that ever existed — such as

belonged to Bacon, Newton, Butler; upon some of the most acute, subtile, and penetrating—such as were possessed by Clark, Berkeley, Locke: it has imposed upon some men of the soundest and clearest practical judgment—sharp, shrewd, cool-headed men—such as Watson and Paley: the very last sort of persons to be easily taken in by groundless pretensions. Really a system of belief that has been maintained by such men is not for every man to sneer at: he who considers it a subject for a sneer must needs, as appears to me, pretend to be a very wise man, and may well be thought a very foolish one.

But it may be said the authority of names is no argument in favour of Christianity. — Neither is the opinion of the most able counsel or physician any argument for the truth of a legal or of a medical doctrine; but is there any man who refuses to let his conduct be guided by such opinion? I do not, however, aim at presenting an argument for believing Christianity, but an argument for examining its evidences; and the fact that such men have examined these evidences, and been satisfied with them, is surely an argument for *that*. — But clergymen have an interest in maintaining the truth of Christianity.—Newton, Locke, Bacon, were *not* clergymen. Clergymen have *no* interest in maintaining the truth of Christianity. Butler, Berkeley, and Watson, would have sat as secure in their bishoprics if they had never written a syl-

lable in favour of Christianity. If Christianity had never been believed, they would never have enjoyed Church benefices ; but Christianity was believed before they were born, and would have continued to be believed after their deaths, without their assistance. They had no interest then in maintaining its truth, in this sense — the only one to the present purpose — that they would have been the better for maintaining it, the worse for not maintaining it.—But there are a number of prejudices that assist on the side of Christianity.—There are many more prejudices to assist against it—the most universal, the most unconquerable of all prejudices, the prejudice which every man has against moral restraint; the prejudice—(and—in this age of honour and spirit, when the sorest imputation a man can undergo is that of being *afraid*,—afraid of any thing in heaven or in earth, — a prejudice of no little strength)—the prejudice against being supposed to be awed by an unseen Power; above all, the prejudice—and it is the one which the wisest and the best men have most difficulty in throwing off—the prejudice (if it is allowable to call it so) against being implicated in the unutterable absurdities,* the

* If ever there was a time when a man might excusably feel shy of professing his serious regard to the gospel, it is the present ; when a great part of those who seek more exclusively to appropriate the title of “ Evangelical ” Christians, seem absolutely engaged in a competition who shall run farthest in the race of absurdity — as if there were no way of honouring God,

follies, and the crimes, of which Christianity has been, and still is made the occasion. Are there

but by depressing man below the level of a rational and moral being. When we find those who are perpetually declaiming against the pride of the human heart, coolly declaring their assurance of being specially distinguished from the mass of mankind as the objects of divine favour, privileged to determine between truth and falsehood, to discriminate between the accepted and the rejected, — when it is assiduously inculcated that the most daring sin a man can be guilty of, is to endeavour to please God by doing what is morally right, — when we are alarmed by the most harrowing representations of the future damnation that awaits us (and which is called *warning* us of our danger) only to be told in the next breath that we can do nothing to help ourselves, — when we are assured that our faith will necessarily produce good works, while we are yet required to make it the very first article of that faith, that good works can avail us nothing, — when a belief in the doctrines of religion is made to denote, not a conviction of the understanding, upon reasonable evidence, but a *feeling*, miraculously impressed on the mind, — when the scriptures are said to present to the eye of reason little more than a mere blank — their real and profitable meaning being altogether a hidden treasure, to which the privileged few (if we may take their own assertion) alone possess the key, — and when we are taught to read the sacred volume, not as supposing that its plain truths would instruct, and its plain precepts direct us, but as a means — having no more apparent relation to the end than any other means (than the hearing of an unknown language, for instance) — of obtaining a supernatural inward illumination, — when the question for ascertaining our progress in religion is not, what *have you done*? how have you thought, and spoken, and acted? but, what has been *done to you*? how have you been acted upon? what has been impressed upon you? what

any prejudices in favour of Christianity equal to these? But let there be prejudices in favour of

have you experienced? — when, in fine, Christianity, instead of being piety, and purity, and love, is bible societies, and tract societies, and missionary societies, and wandering deputations, and meetings, and speeches, and sermons, and doctrines, and text, and chapter, and verse, — when the bonds of Christian charity are narrowed, the rules of Christian prudence disregarded, the restraints of Christian modesty overstepped, — when those whose notions of Christianity are thus manifested assume to themselves exclusively the titles of saints, elect, people of God, — is it to be made a taunt to the rest of mankind that they would be ashamed to wear those titles? Truly they have reason, — if such are the absurdities with which the wearing of those titles would connect them.

It is by no means enough to tell us of *sincerity* and *zeal*. Sincerity and zeal have no more necessary alliance with truth and wisdom, than with folly and falsehood. The people who, in former ages, thought to please God by spending their lives on the top of a pillar, by wearing a hair shirt, or an iron belt, by tearing their backs, and starving their bellies, were, many of them, quite sincere and quite zealous: they gave as good proofs of their zeal and sincerity, and — I cannot help adding — of their good sense too, as many modern professors who look back upon those harmless fooleries with the most profound contempt.

I am anxious however that it should be understood, that it is not against conduct, or motives, but against opinions, and habits of thinking, that my observations have been directed; at least not against *conduct*, as in regard to whether such conduct is morally right, but as to whether it is rational, or considerate, or in *good taste* — (the expression will, to some, seem an inappropriate one; but it will serve to convey my meaning.) It would be the grossest injustice not to allow

revelation, I know of no prejudices which have not given way before the increasing light of reason

that many of the individuals who possess the opinions I have alluded to, are, in practice, genuine Christians: of the most exemplary piety and virtue; zealously pursuing (by such means as *they believe* adequate) the grand objects of religion—the temporal and spiritual good of mankind. But I believe their zeal to be the cause, rather than the consequence of their peculiar doctrines. I believe them to be morally virtuous, not from the influence of their doctrines, but in spite of that influence; or, to speak more correctly, I believe the doctrines which, unknown to themselves, they feel and act upon—and which, when pressed into a corner, they are obliged to recognize—are one thing; those which, from a sort of wrong-headed attachment to the peculiar language of certain texts, they continually and exclusively promulgate—are another. Abstractedly speaking, religious zeal is always good. Without zeal, the purest doctrines may have little effect: if there is but zeal, whatever absurdities may be professed, and even contended for, reason will, in practice, assert its supremacy. *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.* In spite of all religious tenets, the human breast will retain the conviction, that man is *free to choose* between virtue and vice, and that without *moral virtue*, the favour of the Deity can never be obtained. That absurd tenets are professed by some of the most pious of men, does not make those tenets a whit less absurd. Some people will be virtuous under any system of opinions; but doctrines which may fail of stifling dispositions naturally good, will yet be perverted to the most dangerous purposes by dispositions of an opposite kind. The effects of the tenets I am describing have not yet had full time to develop themselves. That they will soon produce a rich crop of hypocrisy and immorality, on the one hand, of levity and infidelity, on the other, I can scarcely entertain a doubt. If I mistake not, some

in this intelligent, this doubting, this searching age. Have individuals or have nations become less apt to believe in Christianity as they became more thoughtful, more learned, more intelligent? Has an increase of knowledge invariably removed this prejudice as it has done other prejudices? on the contrary, is not the conviction of the truth of Christianity strongest in those individuals, and those nations, who have made the largest advances in knowledge? And at this moment, while every species of antiquated prejudice is fast wearing away, is there any appearance of Christianity's going with the rest? Is there any appearance of its being subjected to the investigation of keener,

shoots of these sorts of crop are already discoverable; and it almost seems as if society were to exhibit, ere long, the features of that most disgusting and unamiable period of British history (I mean the time of the Charleses) concerning which it is hard to say whether the canting bigotry of the one side, or the daring profligacy of the other, was the more hateful; whether the spiritual pride of the one party, was less intolerable than the worldly insolence of the other; or which of the two parties had the best reason to hate and despise the other.

I know no duty, at the present time, of greater urgency and difficulty, than that which I conceive lies upon all those who are religious upon *rational conviction*, to endeavour, on the one hand, to exhibit their serious regard for religion, and to maintain the strictness of its obligations, *without running into the absurdities of the day*; and to exert themselves, on the other, to stem the progress of those absurdities, *without doing injury to religion itself*.

of more emancipated, or of more enlarged intellects, than have already been employed upon it?

Having mentioned the presumption in favour of the truth of Christianity which arises from its reception by some of the most sagacious and best informed men that have ever lived, I cannot help offering some remarks on the correspondent presumption against it.

First, I would observe, that it is one thing not to believe, another to disbelieve. The one is the negation, the other the reverse of belief. That a man does not believe any particular matter of fact, may really mean nothing more than either that he is unacquainted with that fact, or that, with a general knowledge of the fact, and of the evidence on which it rests, he may never have thought fit to form a determination in his own mind as to whether it is a fact or not. Ask such and such a man whether he believes the existence of Saturn's ring, and he may safely say he does not: for he may never have heard of such a thing, or know what it means. Ask another whether he believes that the New Zealanders eat their prisoners, and he too may say he does not believe it; because though he may have heard of such a thing, or read the relations of travellers, he may never have considered whether those relations were credible or not. Want of belief then, in one man, is not always such a presumption against the truth of any fact, as belief, in another, is a presumption in fa-

your of its truth. Add to which, that the unbelieving side is generally that which would be affected by any one who should desire to evince superior shrewdness, or who should seek occasion for the exercise of wit and ridicule. Now it is certain that Newton, Locke, and Butler, believed in Christianity; it is not, I think, quite so certain that Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire, disbelieved it: most assuredly they have not assigned sufficient grounds for disbelieving, (even in the way that a Deist would reckon of such sufficiency,) nor are we otherwise warranted in ascribing any great weight to their opinion on the subject.—What did Hume establish, or attempt to establish, against Christianity? He wrote an essay to prove (what I think a candid Deist would allow to be proving too much) that no evidence whatever could, in the nature of things, make a miracle credible.—The same person wrote an essay, apparently with equal good faith and sincerity (I may add—with equal success) to prove that neither the external world, nor himself, nor any other being existed; and another essay (in the form of a dialogue) to prove that the most horrible and unnatural crimes are capable of being viewed as virtues, by men in a different state of society, and therefore that the difference between them is merely conventional or ideal.—And, of the great variety of original opinions put forth by Hume on subjects of philosophy—while most are praised for ingenuity,

how many, let me ask, are believed, or received as true among philosophers in general? — So much for the weight to which this writer would seem entitled on the present question.

What did Gibbon effect against Christianity? He stated several circumstances which went to favour its propagation in the Roman empire, independently of any support from supernatural aid. His argument against Christianity is much about such an argument as it would be against the skill of a physician, to shew that, in any particular case where a cure had been brought about under his management, the patient exhibited some symptoms that made his recovery possible, even without medical assistance. — Gibbon's is not a positive argument against Christianity; his conclusion, if made out, but weighs against the argument in favour of it, — only against an *auxiliary branch* of the argument (namely, that which is founded on the rapidity of its propagation in the Roman empire) — only *pro tanto* against *that*. — Gibbon's chief study, while writing his history, seems to have been, to produce a striking literary composition; and, to me at least, the merits of the style are fully more conspicuous than any of the other merits for which the work is famed. The author seems always ready to run away in any direction that promises the opportunity of saying a smart thing; and I cannot help suspecting that the attack upon Christianity was commenced more on

account of the scope which it seemed to afford for the exercise of that delicate irony in which Mr. Gibbon excelled, and on which he piqued himself, than for the sake of expressing a deliberate conviction upon a question of truth or falsehood. It would indeed be impossible to say that Gibbon bore no stronger dislike to Christianity, than what could be thus explained. The adoration which he pays to the character of the Emperor Julian, betrays so warm a sympathy with the opinions of that noted personage, as compels us to allow that if Mr. Gibbon was not wholly an unbeliever, he was wholly desirous of being so.— That a man of good judgment, and good disposition, might be dissatisfied with the evidence of the truth of Christianity, is a concession which courtesy, if not truth demands. But that any man, come to years of understanding, should believe, sincerely believe, in the puerilities of the heathen mythology — *as Julian did* — betrays, if not such a general, at least such a local debility of intellect, as almost entitles us to draw the same sort of testimony, in favour of an opinion, from such a man's dissent, as we should from another man's concurrence. If he who is enamoured of absurdity, may be presumed to loathe the truth, then it is anything but discreditable to Christianity, to have been found worthy of the hostility of Julian, and of Julian's admirer.

I have already observed, however, that Gibbon's

remarks, at most, weaken but one branch of the argument for Christianity. How little they do even in this way, has been shewn by many eminent writers who have subjected this part of his work to examination. — Translate Gibbon's sneers into plain propositions against Christianity, and see what they will amount to. — From this deduct what strike, not against Christianity itself, but against the follies and crimes of its professors — and see what you will have remaining.

These few remarks on the deistical writings of Hume and Gibbon have been made for the sake of instancing how very slight are the grounds which two of the most noted opponents of Christianity have furnished for being considered as *authorities* upon the question of its truth. It is entirely beside my purpose to extend the examination. Just stopping to inquire, in passing, what weight, in a question of this nature, is due to Voltaire*—a wit, a poet, a lively narrator, a man of fancy and imagination, say — which is but the truth — a man of genius, but a man who can never be supposed to have examined such a subject as this with the requisite care and attention, — let me in general ask how many deistical writers have been free from the imputation of licentiousness, disingenuity, levity? how many have been, in their ordinary

* Christianity, as Voltaire spoke and wrote of it, was Christianity as exhibited by the French church of his day. With this idea of Christianity, he *must* have been a Deist—or a fool.

life and circumstances, exempt from *considerable* eccentricities of mind, manners, or conduct — such as should, in fairness, detract from the weight of their judgment upon a grave question? I know this mode of arguing may be retaliated, with full effect, against many of the supporters of Christianity; but can one opposer of it be produced, (or how many of such) whose character was that of a man of irreproachable morality, of solid judgment, fair and candid disposition, full information, and who either appeared, or professed to examine the controversy, seriously, in its full extent, and with the spirit in which a sober and ingenuous inquirer generally investigates a philosophical question?

The question regarding the truth of Christianity is a *large* question, and one in the decision of which it is necessary to survey a wide range of circumstantial evidence. The opposers of Christianity are invariably to be found nibbling at details;* and nothing, for the most part, can be more

* One man is a Deist, because he cannot conceive how Noah stowed the animals in the ark; another, because he supposes the throat of a whale could not have been wide enough to swallow up Jonah; a third, for some other reason equally weighty. Persons who would be at a loss to see their way through an argument of three steps, are frequently pleased to call themselves *Deists*, — or rather cautiously to hint their free opinions, with the air of men fearing to incur — like other Galileos — the resentment of an age which they have so far outstripped!

easy than to find insulated points on which an impression may be made. Take some particular miracle in the gospel; view it by itself; compare it, merely as a miracle, with some heathen miracle—and really there may be little to enable us to say that the one is true, the other false. Take any particular prophecy—it may be impossible to deny that such a one might have been uttered at random, and fulfilled by chance. Pick out certain parts of the narrative of the scriptures; set them side by side with some of the fables of ancient profane history, and there may seem little to choose between them. Take any particular moral precept; something little worse, or quite as good, may be found in some part, of some work, of some heathen philosopher.—This is not the fair way of arguing the question.—The points at issue between the Christian and the Deist, are not—was this a real miracle? was this a real prophecy? is this fact truly narrated? is this doctrine a true doctrine? all the points maintained by the Christian against the Deist, I take to be these (at least I should not, in controversy with a Deist, think it wise to extend my front—if I may use a military phrase—beyond these two positions) namely—that the Deity has made certain direct communications to mankind: that the Jewish and Christian scriptures contain an account more or less full, more or less true, of these communications. Many particular parts of the scripture history,

many particular doctrines, are so far from being proofs of the general truth of revelation, that the truth of these particulars must be taken as a deduction from the truth of a general position, which general position is supported by the evidence of other particulars ; and what particulars are to be proofs of the truth of the general position, what particulars are themselves to be proved from the truth of the general position, the Christian assumes the right, in this dispute, of choosing for himself.*

But those who would justly appreciate the force of the Christian argument, must not entertain even the greater divisions of the proof as so many

* As an illustration of what I mean, take the miraculous birth of Jesus by a virgin — an incident which affords especial merriment to unbelievers. Were Christians to believe such an occurrence simply on the special evidence that belongs to that occurrence, and which is nothing more than the word of the narrator, — still more, were they to put forth this miraculous occurrence as one of the *proofs* of the truth of revelation,—they would indeed deserve all the derision that could possibly be heaped upon them. But in a controversy with a Deist, they have no occasion whatever to maintain the truth of this particular fact, (which is here taken only as an instance of many other facts similarly circumstanced,) and they argue thus : Believe this or not as you please ; we have an incontrovertible mass of evidence to prove the general position that Jesus was endowed with miraculous powers, that his life was attended with miraculous circumstances ; and if this is a circumstance of which we can have no proof by itself, we have proof of other circumstances as wonderful, and, believing which, we see no reason for disbelieving this, but the contrary.

distinct propositions, each of which is maintained by itself. That certain miracles were performed, is not put forth as one detached fact ; that certain doctrines were taught, as another ; that certain prophecies were made and fulfilled, as a third. The same persons who performed, or pretended to perform the miracles, furnished a perfectly pure system of theology, a perfectly sound system of morals. The same system of theology and morals that was thus distinguished for its own excellence, thus fortified by miraculous pretensions, was farther propped up by the evidence of a series of prophecies. — That the system of theology and morals was in every respect sound and reasonable, and altogether consistent with what the most enlightened philosophy would teach us to expect in a divine revelation — (although no one of the philosophers living up to that period had produced such a system — nor, I might say, could such a system be extracted from the works of any number, or of all of them) — this would be some presumption of the divine origin of such a system — at least it would be the negative presumption which arises from the absence of all presumption, *where some presumption might naturally be looked for*, on the other side : still it might not be altogether beyond the limits of human wisdom or imagination to form such a system — but how *chanced this* system to be fortified by the evidence, *such as it was*, of the miracles and the prophe-

cies? — That certain miracles were performed, there is at least *some* evidence: still, there have been impostures of this kind, and dupes to be taken in by imposture — but how come the miracles to be connected with the doctrine and the prophecies? — That various prophecies were uttered and fulfilled, there is *some* degree of evidence: still there have often been false prophecies, and false prophecies have chanced to be fulfilled — but how chanced these prophecies to be found in company with the miracles and the doctrine? Allowing that the excellence of the doctrine taken by itself should go for little; that the evidence for the miracles was below what would be necessary to establish their truth; that the proof of the uttering, or of the fulfilment of the prophecies, was far from complete or indubitable — (neither of which points I do allow) — is it not something extraordinary that these three species of evidence, *such as is the degree of each*, should be found co-existent in favour of the position they are called to establish? — But when we come to examine the strength of those great props of Christianity separately, we find each to be borne up by such a variety of circumstances, as may fully enable it to stand by itself, to communicate support to other props instead of needing to obtain such support from them. Thus as respects the miracles: — That such a man as Jesus Christ lived, that he *pretended* to work miracles, is what the most obstinate

Deist will own : any one who denies this, would deny that the Christian religion exists. Of this man, and of his miracles, we have some written accounts. That these accounts are true (meaning by *true* that they relate what *appeared* to take place — still supposing that the miracles might be mere deceptions) is as certain as that any history whatever is true. Christianity exists : it must have had a beginning : that it began at the *time* stated in our accounts, is clear from general history : that the *manner* of its beginning, as to outward appearance, was more or less like what is described in our accounts, it would be altogether absurd to deny. The main fact is certain : these accounts of the manner in which that fact occurred *exist* : they are uncontradicted by any other accounts : they are *the* accounts of the fact — all the accounts of it that have been given. But we need not rest here ; for it is undeniably evident, upon the face of these accounts, that the writers of them were acquainted with the occurrences of which they wrote, some of them from personal knowledge, others from the testimony of spectators, or from the absolute notoriety of the occurrences : it is evident, in short, that the writers had all those means of knowing the circumstances that are ever deemed necessary in such cases. It is farther evident that they related occurrences as *they believed* them to have happened. — On these heads (namely, that our accounts of the institu-

tion of Christianity were written by persons having a knowledge of the circumstances, and disposed to relate them truly to the best of their belief) — an incredible number of minute particulars has been collected by the acuteness and diligence of biblical critics. The correspondence of these narratives, in those points where they mutually and incidentally touch, with the general history of the period as known from other sources; the references to the manners, ideas, superstitions, feelings, persons, and occurrences, of the time and the place; allusions to geographical and topographical peculiarities; the correspondence between the different narratives, and between the narratives and the letters of some of the principal actors; the air of truth and candour; the simplicity of the composition, — shewing the utter inability of the composers to invent such a narrative — all these minute circumstances, each branching out into others still more minute, have conspired to satisfy all those who are the best judges of the authenticity of a historical composition, that the New Testament history is at least a *true history of facts as they appeared to happen*. But if we are brought to own the truth of the New Testament history, as implying merely this that the facts were, in appearance, what they are represented, it seems altogether impossible to refuse our credence to the reality of the miracles. The character of those miracles—all of a benevolent kind;

the character of the man who pretended to perform them—harmless, upright, gentle, unambitious, compassionate, pious; of strong sense, penetration, and quickness, yet with no appearance of craft or selfishness, and entirely destitute of a knowledge of human literature and science,—are all circumstances which strongly—I think, irresistibly—weigh against the supposition of deception. But waving all this, if we admit the Gospel history to be *true* (in the sense of *sincerely related* by persons knowing the facts) we must own that these miracles were believed to be real by the relators of them, and a great many others. Of the sincerity of their belief, they gave the strongest of all testimonies. We may depend upon it that the truth of no fact will be so well sifted, as of that, the acknowledgment of which must end in a man's reforming his actions, and abandoning his worldly interest. But, looking to the nature of some of those miracles, it is altogether impossible to conceive how they could have been believed, how they could have escaped detection, (especially as so many were anxious to detect them,) had they not been *real*. If we believe the history to be true, we must believe that many of those miracles were openly performed; we must believe that the leading people among the Jews were on the watch to expose the falsity of Christ's pretensions; and that, though their enmity towards him was sufficient to make them seek and obtain

form the very essence of the history. They may all be abstracted, and leave the history better without them.

But turning next to the case of the prophecies. —Silly people have done much mischief with this part of the evidence, by straining it too far. By looking for predictions where it is obvious none were intended to be made, and searching out events, at all hazards, to suit them, they induce the suspicion that, amid the multitude and variety of human events, the prophets could not, so to speak, have been far out in the long run, whatever they might have predicted: and, looking to the manner in which passages of scripture have been made into prophecies, and fulfilments found for them, it is not perhaps going too far to say, that any prophecy might find an event, any event a prophecy. But certainly it cannot be said of all the prophecies, either that they are vague in themselves, or such as events can be but loosely fitted to. Taking into view that a prophecy relating to human transactions cannot always be made perfectly minute and circumstantial, without giving an opportunity to men of defeating and falsifying it, it must be owned that there are numerous prophecies, in both the Old and New Testament, which distinctly,—as distinctly as, under the restriction just specified, is possible—predict particular occurrences; and not only occurrences, but trains and combinations of occurrences, that have actu-

ally happened in such a manner as to answer to the prediction, even in regard to circumstances of a very minute kind. Now granting that any one, in particular, of these prophecies might have been a lucky guess, nay, that some ones, in particular, might have been inserted after the event (a supposition, by the way, of which there is not only no proof, but proof for the most part to the contrary) is it possible to take them altogether and retain either of these suppositions? That a prediction was made of a distinguished person—distinguished in a peculiar and extraordinary sense—who was to arise among the Jews, is matter of history; not of Christian, but of Jewish history; not only of Jewish, but of heathen history. The mere prediction of an eminent person might safely have been hazarded; but when we find a great number of the most minute incidents of his life and death either directly mentioned or obscurely typified; above all, when we find one particular mentioned by one prophet, another particular by another prophet, a third particular by a third prophet, all living in different ages,—can all this be chance? Granting for a moment that it might—take Daniel's prophecies of the various political revolutions that were to succeed his times; Christ's predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem; the apostles' predictions about the corruptions of popery; the predictions, in many parts of scripture, of the spread of the gospel, and those regarding the dispersion and

preservation of the Jews—granting, I repeat, that any one of these might be a lucky guess, or a posterior insertion, can we possibly apply one or other of such suppositions to the whole? granting that there are a great variety of scriptural passages that are generally reckoned as prophecies, of which no one, taken by itself, is a clear undoubted prediction of the event, or has received a clear undoubted fulfilment—is it likely that such a number of even doubtful predictions could have each received even such a doubtful fulfilment?—Surely there is a degree of evidence in these prophecies which, supposing it not conclusive of itself, is at all events sufficient to give much additional weight to other proofs.

With regard to the *doctrines* of Christianity, it is possible to say, in a general way of speaking, that there is nothing but what the power of human reason might have arrived at. But those who have more deeply and more minutely examined the spirit of those doctrines, have pointed out a variety of traits belonging to them, which indicate a juster knowledge of principles, more enlarged views, and a nicer adaptation of moral precepts to every possible circumstance of the human condition, than, upon the supposition of a merely human origin, is consistent with any reasonable degree of probability. The establishment of the general principle of *love* or *charity*, was the establishment, for the first time, of the true principle

of moral virtue : and in drawing the just deductions from that principle, some comparatively fictitious virtues were removed from the place which that age allowed ; other virtues, not then regarded as such, received their due rank. Patriotism, then but a more enlarged selfishness, — often the cover of crimes, the infamy of which, too great for an individual to bear, was by this magic word transferred to the community—was merged in, or made a branch of general philanthropy. Almsgiving, humanity to slaves and inferiors, were for the first time brought into a prominent place in the list of moral duties. Forgiveness of injuries, removed from its imagined alliance with littleness of soul, was identified with true greatness. Humility, not to be known as a becoming disposition, until a law of perfect purity had given the means of comparing man as he is, with man as he ought to be—then for the first time assumed the rank of a virtue. The commands to maintain purity of thought and imagination, over and above purity of words and actions, strike at the root, where less profound moralists would have been content with aiming at the branches. The directions given for the discharge of civil duties, and those for the conduct to be pursued in respect to heathens, have the singular merit of preserving a regard at once to what the Christian owed to himself and his religion, on the one hand ; what the man owed to his fellow-man on the other. The pru-

dence of these directions in regard to the Christian's duty to the state, and his duty to the unbeliever, is the more remarkable, since, as respects these cases, nothing less than the soundest judgment could have steered between the danger of compromise on the one hand, of inhumanity and insubordination on the other.

These nice traits, some of them containing the most beautiful improvements upon the spirit of the morality of that age, others, by the most delicate adjustment, applying the precepts and principles of a new and untried faith to the most peculiar exigencies of the human condition, are *not* what were to be looked for on the supposition of their having merely a human origin; they are just what *were* to be looked for on the supposition of a Divine origin.

The traits which I have noticed would be sufficiently remarkable, even if they could be thought to have proceeded from men of refined genius or profound philosophy. The system of theology and morals contained in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, would, to say the least, have done credit to the first philosopher of ancient times; but, on the assumption which I have already provided the right to make, that the New Testament history contains a *true account*, among other things, of the circumstances of the writers, we must believe that this system of theology and ethics was produced by a set of men not above the condition

of manual labourers. Indeed this fact stands upon no assumption of the truth of their account. The style of their writings proclaims it. — What would have been, in any view, extraordinary, becomes, in this view, miraculous.

But to rest solely upon the intellectual ability displayed in the formation of such a system of morality as Christianity presents, to consider this system merely as exhibiting a degree of talent, judgment, or observation, superior to what could have been expected from its authors, is not doing full justice to the argument derived from this source. The evidence it bears to the moral character of its authors is such as to vouch, in a manner strongly persuasive, for the truth and reality of their pretensions. It is at least *unlikely* that any but men of virtuous feelings and dispositions could have delineated such a system of morality. There are indeed instances of very depraved characters who have written of virtue judiciously and impressively. But the instances are not many ; and there is a delicacy, a warmth, a harmony, a softness, a moderation, a consistency, in the Scripture morality, which could only have proceeded from men who wrote from the heart ; men who, with the largest views of moral duty, had the strictest sense of moral obligation, the nicest perception of moral decency — the very last sort of men to have been capable of engaging in a deliberate imposture. The virtue which they

described, and, in describing, must have possessed, had all the strictness of the true virtue, without the austerity of the false ; all the forbearance of the true, without the laxity of the false ; all the prudence of the true, without the cunning of the false.

So pressing is the conviction derived from the morality of the gospel, that some Deists have been reduced to offer the supposition that Christ and his apostles were enlightened philanthropists, who sought to delude mankind into the practice of piety and virtue : — as if men with such a reach of thought, such an extent of observation, such an insight into principles, such sobriety of judgment, as is displayed in their moral code ; men having such an enthusiasm for virtue as the design imputed to them supposes — could have failed to overlook the vast folly, and the vast impropriety, of attempting to base a true system of theology and morals upon a piece of deliberate wilful fraud.

That all this mass of concurrent evidence should exist in favour of Christianity, if Christianity is a fiction, is in a high degree extraordinary ; but that, upon the same supposition, no *decisive* evidence has ever been found *against* it, seems to me extraordinary in a still higher degree. In the multitude of sources from which it draws its testimonies, it is very strange that *something* has not been found to tell strongly and directly, nay, overpoweringly, against it. In the number of those whom scripture describes as having pretended to

perform miracles, and as having been believed to perform miracles, it is very strange — if these miracles were but tricks — that no one ever failed in the execution of any of these tricks, that no one ever was unlucky enough to let the cheat be seen. In the number of those who uttered prophecies, in the number of prophecies that were uttered, and have been recorded, it is very strange that no prophecy ever chanced to be made that has since turned out to be plainly false; very strange that none of the pretended prophets ever went so far beyond the line of discretion as to hazard some prediction that should be found incapable of receiving even a plausible fulfilment. Is it not strange that, among all the persons concerned in the establishment of Judaism and Christianity, from Moses to St. John, none mistook his part, none made a palpable blunder, none ever betrayed the imposture? Is it not strange, that, in all the ways in which the evidence of Christianity has been turned and twisted, no one ever discovered the end of a string by which this knot of imposture — if such it were — could be effectually disentangled?

When, formerly, I pointed attention to the circumstance that Christianity had been believed by so many, and by so many able and ingenious, men, it was merely as an argument to shew that the question regarding its truth is not a *trifling* question—not a question unworthy of considera-

tion,—such a one, for instance, as whether the theological system of any of the South Sea Islands is a true one. I must now maintain, however, that the almost universal credence which Christianity has received among the most enlightened nations, and the most enlightened men of the most enlightened nations, is, as regards the specific case, a *proper and direct argument* for the truth of Christianity itself.

The opinion of men, and even of men of knowledge and ability, in favour of the *truth* of any proposition, as opposed to its *uncertainty* is one thing; their opinion of its truth, in opposition to its *wilful falsehood*, is another. Authority, in the latter case, is of as much more value than in the former, as men are more unlikely to be made believe in falsehood (especially where their suspicion has been roused) than they are to be ignorant of the whole truth; as much more, as they are more likely not to know what *is*, than to believe what *is not*; as much more, in fine, as it is more difficult to make a man believe he sees what is not before him, than merely to blindfold him. Mere obscurity only prevents inquiry; wilful imposture provokes inquiry, and must, to succeed, delude the inquirer. If Christianity is not true, those by whom it was first instituted did not express only an *erroneous opinion*, but a *lie* which they knew to be a lie. Now no doubt a single lie, or a few lies upon a particular subject, may be put forth and

believed unsuspectingly ; lies relating to a single circumstance or to a few circumstances, may be supported by such deceptions as may prevent their being detected ; lies told by a single person, or by a few having good opportunities of combination, may be uttered in such a manner as to avoid inconsistency. But that a lie such as this, that the authors of Christianity had received a divine commission, a lie embracing such a number and variety of *circumstantial* lies within it — so many lies that could be controverted by facts — so many that could be disproved by reasoning — so many that might contradict each other — so many that might be exposed by their own absurdity, or by the treachery, or the compunction, or the caprice, or the thoughtlessness, or the unskilfulness, or the mutual irritations and quarrels, or the selfish hopes or fears, of those who uttered them—that so many lies, relating to so many circumstances, should have been told by so many persons, belonging to so many different times and places, so as to unite in supporting *one* imposture ; and with such effect, that that imposture should not only deceive the persons living at the time (many of whom, there can be no doubt, would have but been happy to expose it) but the generality of men—including by far the greater number of intelligent and ingenious men — for many succeeding ages, during which the strictest and most minute scrutiny was made into all the grounds on which the imposture

rested,—that a deception of such boldness, such extent, as Christianity is — if it is a deception — should have proved *successful*, and maintained itself till this time of day — is what I hold to exceed all the bounds of probability. The credence then which this imposture, — supposing it to be such,—has received, is, of itself,—considering the nature of the imposture, and who they are that have been imposed upon — the true and proper sort of argument to prove it to be no imposture ; because it is a credence which an imposture of such a kind, if an imposture, could never have obtained. I mean, in short, to assert the *impossibility* that the authors of Christianity, supposing them impostors, *could* have cheated the world in the way they have done.

The argument *ad absurdum* in favour of Christianity seems to me to contain a very strong view of the case. Suppose it a true revelation, and all is plain and natural. It is all that we might expect it to be, even to the very sort and amount of difficulties that might be expected. Suppose it false, and every thing is quite different from what we might expect it to be, and the difficulties which we find in it are of a kind that might have been avoided with one-tenth of the talent otherwise displayed. Reasoning from the supposition of its falsehood, we fall into absurdity after absurdity—escaping from one, only to run into another. Do we suppose that the authors of Christianity were

impostors? we must suppose so in the face of every proof of integrity, simplicity, earnestness, disinterestedness, that men could possibly furnish. Do we suppose them dupes — which however presupposes an impostor — we must believe that men who gave numerous and various instances of discretion, prudence, and address, in some of the most critical situations in which men could possibly have been placed, allowed themselves to be imposed upon under circumstances where we can hardly imagine the veriest fool would have failed to discern the cheat. Do we suppose them visionary enthusiasts? we must persuade ourselves that men who were governed by a diseased imagination were capable of composing a sound and reasonable system of morals, and of propagating it with all possible coolness, steadiness, good sense, and moderation. Can we satisfy ourselves that one or a few of the persons were either dupes, impostors, or enthusiasts — we have others of different characters, circumstances, places, and times, who must all have been exposed to the same delusion, all have combined in the same imposture, all been infected with the same enthusiasm. Do we reject the scriptural history altogether? we lose the means of explaining how the world came to be as we find it to be now, and to have been at any particular point of the connection between sacred and profane history.

It is abundantly easy to ring changes upon

“priestcraft,” — “enthusiasm,” — “pious frauds,” — “ocular delusions,” — “barbarous traditions,” — and, to certain persons, these talismanic words afford as much satisfaction, in the present inquiry, as “subtile essences,” — “hidden powers,” — “invisible ether,” — “penetrating fluids,” — “minute atoms,” afford to persons of the same intellectual grade, in their physical inquiries. But what is required is this — frame an account of the whole matter in all its minute details of fact (such as you admit the fact to be) which shall be consistent with the supposition either of imposture, or enthusiasm, or both, or anything else, but a divine revelation, — do this, and try whether you will not require our assent to still greater improbabilities than any which our belief of Christianity presents to us. — For my own part, having frequently tried to frame some hypothesis of the kind mentioned, I must say that, viewing the extreme and numerous improbabilities that are to be encountered under any supposition but that of the truth of Christianity, I have the credulity to be a believer — I have *not* the credulity to be an unbeliever.

In speaking, a little ago, of the excellence of the Christian system of theology and morals, I spoke of this excellence merely as a *cumulative* argument, in connection with the evidence derived from miracles and prophecies. But the apparent truth and reasonableness of the doctrines are not merely additional presumptions of their divine

origin (as proving the unlikelihood of their being the offspring of human imposture) but serve to remove a positive argument against revelation, — that which, in the way of general reasoning, asserts the improbability of a revelation. As a cumulative proof, the truth of what was revealed would have been as strong had the subject of the revelation been the occurrences going on at a distant place, the existence of an unknown island, or any other circumstance which the party pretending to the revelation might have been altogether without the apparent means of being acquainted with. In this case, however, the needlessness, the trifling and limited nature of the revelation, would have been an argument against the divinity of its origin. But how different is the case as regards the subject of the Christian revelation?

For, let me now ask, what is it that all this vast mass of evidence, consisting of so many minute particulars — of some particulars, each of which is in itself an evidence — what is it that it would go to prove? what shall we be reduced to admit, if we admit the force of this evidence? Is it any thing utterly improbable — utterly incredible? anything carrying violent and intolerable absurdity in the face of it? — It is simply this, — not that the Deity made some particular prodigy be exhibited to surprise or amuse us — not that he gave us some particular piece of information, gra-

tifying to our curiosity, or ministering to a temporary convenience — not that the Deity, after leaving men to themselves for a succession of ages, all at once bethought himself of making a certain communication to them — but, that God, on the first creation of mankind, informed them how they, and the world in which they lived, had been created ; to whose government they were subject, and what sort of conduct their governor would reward or punish : that God, at various times in the early periods of the world, communicated with mankind according to their occasions and to his purposes : that he continued this communication until he had, by due degrees, made a sufficiently full revelation to man of his origin, condition, destination, duty ; and had sufficiently provided for the propagation and future maintenance, by human means, of the knowledge thus communicated. This is that which the strongest, and most convincing, and numerous proofs have been given to make us believe. — I cannot help saying that so extremely credible does it appear to me that God would have made a revelation in the manner described, that, did I find it but generally asserted that such had been the case, were there merely a vague tradition of it without a known origin, I should think the thing so perfectly likely as to see no reasonable ground for calling it in question ; while, on the other hand, such is the evidence with which the fact, as the matter stands, comes

supported, that I should be at a loss how to disbelieve it, were it even, in itself, altogether improbable.

But then as to the difficulties to be found in Christianity:—the same sort of difficulties exist in Deism, or Atheism, or entire scepticism. A man who believes nothing at all, has difficulties even in his unbelief. But, take away those difficulties which arise from the nature of the subjects, and from man's want of capacity to comprehend such subjects — those which originate in causes purely literary (difficulties in language, inaccuracies in copies, ignorance of the manners of remote ages, &c.)—those which admit of a total, or a partial solution—take all these away, and will any remain? Perhaps there may; but the question is not whether there are not difficulties, but whether any or all of those difficulties are sufficient to overbalance the whole weight of evidence on the other side.

The object of the present section was merely to deduce the *special* duty of examining the evidence of revealed religion, from the *general* principles of morals; and the hasty glance which I have thrown over the evidences of Christianity has been solely for the purpose of illustrating what I conceive to be the true and fair method of dealing with the evidence, that is, to take it in all its minutiae as bearing upon the single point that the revelation of which the Scriptures give an account (more or less full, more or less true) was a real revelation. This

is the sole question with the Deist. I by no means say, however, that all the evidence must be examined in detail and in combination before a man can rationally believe. I do say, that, until such examination has been made, no one is entitled to *disbelieve*.

Persons who are adverse to the recognition of Christianity, are never at a loss either for a salvo to their own misgivings, or an answer to the admonitions of others, in the proposition that *belief is involuntary and dependent upon evidence* — one of those sayings which, true in one sense, and false in another, are not the least seldom employed where they are the least applicable.* Let me ask, is there anything in this plea which might not be used by a judge or jurymen taxed with giving an unjust decision? Is a judge responsible for his judgment — a jurymen for his verdict? certainly not, in the sense that he can, at pleasure, or by any effort, believe either alternative of the case presented to him. But is a judge or a jurymen therefore under no responsibility? can there be nothing

* The proper occasion for the inculcation of this sentiment, is where articles of belief or unbelief are subjected to persecution, or to restraints or privations of the nature of persecution. Persecution, however, is to be reprobated, not because erroneous belief cannot be criminal, but because its criminality cannot be established; because the error may belong to the ruler as well as to the subject, to the stronger as well as to the weaker party.

morally culpable in a verdict or judgment? I take it each of such persons is responsible for three things — first, for his impartiality — secondly, for his attention,—thirdly, for his truth, in uttering what he really believes. Surely a man is answerable for his acceptance or rejection of revelation in these ways.

All this would hold good, if *believing in Christianity* imported merely the formation or expression of an opinion—if it were a mere matter of affirmation or denial; and, also, if the sentiment of *belief* must inevitably be formed, and made decidedly manifest to consciousness, by the mere production of a specific amount of evidence—neither of which suppositions would be correct. To believe in Christianity means *to become a Christian*, in the ordinary sense of the words ;—not to assent to a proposition or propositions, but to decide a case of conduct—not to say *yes*, or *no*, but to *act* in a certain way. Now in cases where the question is, whether a man will or will not *act* upon some information or advice presented to him, it often happens that there is no other way in which even he himself can determine whether he believes such information or advice or not, but by his choice to act upon it or not. Wherever the correctness of information or advice falls short of absolute certainty, there is always a *chance* that a man may safely disregard it —(and who does not know what *desperate* hazards a man will run with some darling object to pursue,

some hated course to avoid?) If then a man *chooses to run the hazard*, he is said, and in a very just and intelligible sense, to *disbelieve* the information or advice, and this even while he owns all the *probability* to be on the side of its truth.—Am I mistaken in supposing that the disbelief of Christianity professed by many persons is of this kind? Is there, then, any responsibility for belief here?

There are many questions relating to practical conduct, in which neither side may be either demonstratively true, or demonstratively false; and where a man's believing either the one side or the other means nothing more than his adopting that side, that is, his choosing or determining to act upon it. If a friend admonishes me that my idle and indolent habits will ruin my business, or that my addiction to intemperance will injure my health, or that my extravagance will waste my fortune,—if I take his advice and alter my conduct, I believe him, — if I reject his advice and continue my former conduct, I disbelieve him. In any of those cases it might be quite possible, in the way of argument, to bring the truth of his representations into question. In none of them—where yet every reasonable man would see the justness of his advice—might it be possible for him to *prove* what he asserted. But would it not be altogether idle in me to pretend that my belief or disbelief of what he said depended altogether upon the *evidence* which he brought of its truth; that my disbelief,

if I disbelieved him, was involuntary, what I could not help, could not be required to answer for? Can any one avoid seeing that the point here is really not—*believe or disbelieve*, but—*do or not do*.

The preceding observations have been chiefly directed to shew a responsibility for the particular *act* of acceptance or rejection of revelation. But there is another way in which a responsibility exists—in the sense in which a man is responsible *for the issue of what is a test of his character*.

It seems to me that the word *faith*, in Scripture, to which so many mystical and visionary significations have been attached — signifies just what we otherwise express by the word *religion* — the religious *principle* — with perhaps a more exclusive applicability to the case of persons who have had more or less occasion, from experience or tradition, to consider the possibility of a revelation's being made. That, with or without respect to revelation, religion is a part and indication of a morally good character, there is, I think, no Deist (using the term to express not what a man is *not*, but what he *is*) who will deny. It is the indication of a reflecting, foreseeing mind—a mind intent on something besides present and temporary good ;—the indication of a heart that does not receive the gifts of Providence without thoughts of the *giver* — a heart capable of being penetrated with displays of wisdom and goodness. Religion is a tendency to nourish a persuasion of the existence and

supervision of one Supreme Being, possessed of goodness and wisdom,—joined with a desire to obtain the guidance and protection of that Being. But this desire, when sincere, must inevitably imply (when the possibility of revelation has once been apprehended) *a forwardness to accept and obey any intimation of the will of the Supreme Being*. On principles of general morality and natural religion, then, a readiness to believe revelation, a readiness to admit, rather than dispute, the truth of what purports to be a divine message, is a test of a good character, and what, in this sense, there exists a responsibility for.

But would not this test be alike answered by being even a Mahometan or a professor of any superstition whatever? I am prepared to admit the consequence. If one man, *without rational grounds*, adopts Mahometanism as the will of God; another, *without rational grounds*, rejects it—the former is, without doubt, a *better man* than the latter. But another who is willing not merely to do what is pointed out to him as the will of God, but also to take some pains to ascertain that it is his will, has more religion, and is a better man than either.* If,

* I have already adverted to a fourth case, different from any of these, namely, that of a person who, professing his regard to the divine will, maintains the sufficiency of natural religion for discovering it. The person who, *on this score alone*, declines entering into the question about the truth of revelation, says in effect, to God Almighty, — I know already as

then, I attach the right idea to *faith*, it is so far from being opposed to inquiry, that it requires it. He who shews his devotion to God by taking every offered intimation of his will on trust, behaves with much the same sort of regard towards him as that executor or trustee would, towards a testator, who should just believe the first story of such testator's intentions told by any interested acquaintance, or dependent, instead of searching for proper evidence of those intentions. This is the difference between rational religion and superstition. Both may imply a regard to the divine will—but the one does, the other does not, care to ascertain what that will is.

For the considerations now stated, I should be inclined to say, that the responsibility which a man incurs for the mere mode of his *conducting the inquiry* into the truth of revelation, is but the least part of that which he really lies under. The *spirit* with which he enters upon the inquiry, is, I believe, the main point in this matter. It is, as the test of this spirit, the test of his wish to know and obey the divine will, that a man's belief, or unbelief, is made the ground of his acquittal or condemnation. How is this test generally answered by those who disbelieve revelation—how are its evidences examined by them?—As a man examines the evidences of some old and un-
much as there is any use for—you need not trouble me farther.

thought-of claim brought against him—in which he is desirous to find a flaw or defect that will justify him in resisting it. Shall such a man gravely tell us—he cannot help his belief—his mind passively follows the proofs—he may be mistaken, but it is impossible he can be to blame? Yet this is generally the meaning of the proposition that *belief is involuntary*.

Having thus pointed out wherein there exists a responsibility for belief, let me now point out wherein there is no responsibility. If the truth of revelation is, on the whole, more *probable* than its falsehood, to refuse to act as a Christian is not merely a suspension of the judgment, and, as such *at least innocent*. The judge who declines giving judgment, decides against the plaintiff: the man who does not accept Christianity, rejects it. As a man then is not excusable for disobeying what, on the whole, he believes to be a revelation from heaven, so he need not apprehend that any doubt or want of certainty that may attend his obedience, will render that obedience worthless. Indeed these very doubts may render the obedience not less acceptable, but more so;—or, paradoxical as the sentiment may appear, the more imperfect the *belief* (so as still to be the best of one's belief, and acted on with sincere purpose) the greater would be the faith—i. e. there would be greater devotion to the Divine will shewn by him who should pay obedience to even an obscure and presump-

tive expression of it, than by him who would only be moved by a clear and indubitable one.* In any case where there is a question as to the existence of a duty or command (unopposed by any thing but the agent's ease or inclination) the less the evidence of the duty or command, the greater the zeal or merit of him who obeys it.

I am aware that, with many persons, the certainty, and even correctness of the belief, is that in which its whole virtue lies; and we have all heard of *articles of belief essential to salvation*.†

* This I take to be the meaning of Christ's expression to *Thomas*, — “because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

† To this notion only can we ascribe it that we so often behold religious zealots vehemently professing their belief in propositions utterly absurd, contradictory, or unintelligible. They conceive it a duty to believe these opinions; texts can be found to prove any thing; and what can be proved after this or any sort, what is willingly repeated and asserted, is held to be synonymous with what is believed. Hence propositions absolutely unintelligible are maintained with greater vehemence than any others. In those that are, in any degree, intelligible, it is not always so easy to hide the absurdity and contradiction. Belief in a contradictory or unintelligible proposition, however, is not necessarily disingenuous: because, in the one case, the party may want sagacity to perceive the contradiction, and, in both, may believe the proposition on authority — just as he may believe the truth of any particular proposition of *Euclid*, though not mathematician enough to know what it means. This last species of assent ought properly to be called *credit*, as opposed to belief formed on the merits of the proposition

For my own part, I know of no articles whatever of this kind. To speak of belief as essential to salvation, *strictly as respects the subject of the proposition believed*, seems to me much the same sort of sense as to speak of a certain stature or colour of the eyes as essential to salvation. What is essential to salvation is, that a man *seek* to know and to do God's will. Whether there are any articles of belief, of which, in ordinary circumstances, this would involve the reception, is quite another question; and one which He who can look into the human heart, and He only, is, in any particular case, entitled to determine.

But are we not, it will be asked, told in explicit terms, in scripture, that he who believeth shall be saved—he who believeth not shall be damned?—True—but here, as in all cases where reward is promised for a service or duty—punishment threatened for omission or violation—the Lawgiver is understood to speak *with provision* that his accountable subject is able to perform the command—and with reservation as to any alleviating circumstances that may attend particular cases of failure. To make the authors of Christianity denounce unbelief without this understanding, would be to make them contradict not only their own accounts of the Divine character, but contradict common

itself. It is belief, not in the truth of the proposition, but in the knowledge and sincerity of the person who utters it.



sense.* But let it be considered, besides, that Christ and his apostles offered evidence, appealed to evidence, reasoned on evidence — sometimes in long and elaborate argumentations—thereby admitting that though belief might be withheld *with*, it could not be formed *without*, evidence ; that persons are commended for examining the evidence before they believed,—intimating that they would be justified in disbelieving without evidence ; that there is no case of what appears conscientious disbelief condemned, but cases of its being attended to and satisfied ; that unbelief is invariably ascribed to carelessness or perversity—to moral culpability — warranting the inference that when not arising from such sources, it is free from guilt ; that belief is always taken to include outward profession and a certain conduct in conformity thereto, being matter of voluntary choice ; that, in particular instances of approved faith referred to, the value of the faith is not, apparently, made to consist in the *thing believed*, but in the general willingness to receive and obey any intimation of the Divine will ; and finally, that the authors of Christianity were entitled, and even, by virtue of their pretensions, obliged, to *assume* the general sufficiency of the evidence offered, in

* Besides that to threaten one who, for *want of evidence*, “believed not,” that he would be damned, was a nugatory threat. If *from this cause* he “believed not,” he, of course “believed not” that he would be damned.

amendment upon the manner in which we suppose revelation to have been attested, let them hear a farther amendment that may be made upon their own proposal, namely, that instead of a future judgment being *revealed* at all, judgment should be *executed here at once*. We venture to say that if every individual were, immediately upon committing a transgression, to be struck dead, or to have a limb paralyzed, or a fit of the gout, or the stone, or the tooth-ache, according to the magnitude of the offence, this would keep men in better order than a revelation of hell fire in a future world, supported by evidence absolutely indubitable. — Whatever reason there is for making retribution future instead of instant, there is the same reason for making the truth of revelation to a certain degree doubtful, instead of absolutely certain. Were the truth of revelation as obvious to negligence as to attention, as admissible by prejudice as by candour, as acceptable to depravity as to innocence; were there, in short, no room for the exercise of a *choice* whether a man would observe or overlook it, whether he would deal with it fairly or unfairly, whether he would obey or not obey it — such a revelation could not possibly be made subservient to any of the purposes for which man has been placed in a state of moral probation.

That a man who rejects Christianity is necessarily acting disingenuously, is an assertion which perhaps I am not at liberty to make. But I think

I have advanced enough to justify me in submitting that such a man has some reason to suspect the purity, the strength, or the sincerity of his virtuous principles.

All that belongs to my present purpose is to shew what *duty*, in regard to revealed religion, natural morality exacts ; nor, generally speaking, do I think that Christianity requires anything more to procure an admission of its truth from any man of good heart and plain understanding, than merely that its evidences be candidly examined, and the result of that examination allowed free scope. This is all for which a man can be morally responsible ; but the responsibility is of the deepest and most awful kind, and one which, above all others, deserves to be anxiously contemplated, and diligently discharged.

THE END.

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